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SCIENCE FICTION Quarterly

NOV.

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NOV. 1953
SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY

ALL STORIES NEW



THE IRRATIONALS

by Milton Lesser



BRAND NEW STORIES

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by Miss Dorothy Dixon
Rose Bud, Arkansas

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by Arthur Godfrey



The Navy almost scuttled me. I shudder to think of it. My crazy career could have ended right there. Who knows, I might still be bumming Chesterfields instead of selling them.

To be scuttled by the Navy you've either got to do something wrong or neglect to do something right. They've got you both ways. For my part, I neglected to finish high school.

Ordinarily, a man can get along without a high school diploma. Plenty of men have. But not in the Navy. At least not in the U. S. Navy Materiel School at Bellevue, D. C., back in 1929. In those days a bluejacket had to have a mind like Einstein's. And I didn't.

"Codfrey," said the lieutenant a few days after I'd checked in, "either you learn mathematics and learn it fast or out you go. I'll give you six weeks." This, I figured, was it. For a guy who had to take off his shoes to count

above ten, it was an impossible assignment.

I was ready to turn in my bell-bottoms. But an ad in a magazine stopped me. Here, it said, is your chance to get special training in almost any subject—mathematics included. I hopped on it. Within a week I was enrolled with the International Correspondence Schools studying algebra, geometry and trig for all I was worth.

Came week-end liberty, I studied. Came a holiday, I studied. Came the end of the six weeks, I was top man in the class. Within six weeks I had mastered two years of high school math, thanks to the training I'd gotten.

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Nov.
1953

SCIENCE FICTION Quarterly

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Number
5

Feature Novelet

THE IRRATIONALS

by Milton Lesser 10

It was a world of the queer, where everyone, by law, had to be some sort of neurotic, and where neuroses were artificially induced by syndrome machines. Four times a year, everyone changed their personalities, until...



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ROBERT W. LOWNDES, Editor

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periment with, learn circuit con-
cepts to Radio and Television.

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How to Be a
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A Department of Letters and Comment

As I Was Saying...

I PROMISED a final decision on the fan magazine review situation this time, and I'd like to thank all who sent in letters, postcards, and word-of-mouth comment.

There has been a wide range of opinion expressed on the positive side, for those who favored continuing reviews of the amateur press were also in favor of the following, by a considerable majority: (a) Put the reviews into *Future* and *Dynamic*; a quarterly magazine lags far too far behind any specific issue. This has been stated both by fan-publishers and interested, non-publishing fans. (b) Keep the department, but make it smaller; it takes up too many pages; stories come first. This has been the line pursued by non-fans who, nevertheless, were not opposed to some notice of the fan press. (c) Incorporate the reviews into

Madle's "Inside Science Fiction", and let him select a few top items to discuss, rather than trying to cover everything.

Since we shall have to trim the departments a bit—after all, despite the non-interest in such matters on the part of some of the more rabid fans, we're selling fiction, primarily—I've decided to follow these suggestions. Mr. Beck has received a number of compliments from the readers, but the space situation is such that we could not continue "The Melting Pot" as a separate department, in any case.

A few suggested that we drop the book reviews, instead. I'm afraid that the majority do not agree. Moreover, book-criticisms can play a certain part in defining and improving the standards of the field as a whole. They are

[Turn To Page 8]

Now! The Amazing Facts about

BALDNESS

...AND WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT



The following facts are brought to the attention of the public because of a widespread belief that nothing can be done about hair loss. This belief has no basis in medical fact. Worse, it has condemned many men and women to needless baldness by their neglect to treat certain accepted causes of hair loss.

There are six principal types of hair loss, or alopecia, as it is known in medical terms:

1. Alopecia from diseases of the scalp
2. Alopecia from other diseases or from an improper functioning of the body
3. Alopecia of the aged (senile baldness)
4. Alopecia areata (loss of hair in patches)
5. Alopecia of the young (premature baldness)
6. Alopecia at birth (congenital baldness)

Senile, premature and congenital alopecia cannot be helped by anything now known to modern science. Alopecia from improper functioning of the body requires the advice and treatment of your family physician.

BUT MANY MEDICAL AUTHORITIES NOW BELIEVE A SPECIFIC SCALP DISEASE IS THE MOST COMMON CAUSE OF HAIR LOSS.

This disease is called Seborrhea and can be broadly classified into two clinical forms with the following symptoms:

1. **DRY SEBORRHEA:** The hair is dry, lifeless, and without gloss. A dry flaky dandruff is usually present with accompanying itching. Hair loss is considerable and increases with the progress of this disease.
2. **OILY SEBORRHEA:** The hair and scalp are oily and greasy. The hair is slightly sticky to the touch and has a tendency to mat together. Dandruff takes the form of head scales. Scalp is usually itchy. Hair loss is severe with baldness as the end result.

Many doctors agree that to **NEGLECT** these symptoms of **DRY and OILY SEBORRHEA** is to **INVITE BALDNESS**.

Seborrhea is believed to be caused by three germ organisms — staphylococcus albus, pityrosporum ovale, and acnes bacillus.

These germs attack the sebaceous gland causing an abnormal working of this fat gland. The hair follicle, completely surrounded by the enlarged diseased sebaceous gland, then begins to atrophy. The hair produced becomes smaller and smaller until the hair follicle dies. Baldness is the inevitable result. (See illustration.)

But seborrhea can be controlled, particularly in its early stages. The three germ organisms believed to cause seborrhea, can and should be eliminated before they destroy your normal hair growth.

A post-war development, Comate Medicinal Formula kills these three germ organisms on contact. Proof of Comate's germ-killing properties has been demonstrated in laboratory tests recently conducted by one of the leading testing laboratories in America. (Complete report on file and copies are available on request.)

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- "Your hair formula got rid of my dandruff; my head does not itch any more. I think it is the best of all the formulas I have used."
—E.E., Hamilton, Ohio.
- "Your formula is everything you claim it to be and the first 10 days trial freed me of a very bad case of dry seborrhea."
—J.E.H., Long Beach, Calif.
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—M.H., Johnstown, Pa.
- "I have found almost instant relief. My itching has stopped with one application."
—J.N., Stockton, Calif.
- "My hair looks thicker, not falling out like it used to. Will not be without Comate in the house."
—R.W., Lonsdale, N. I.
- "I haven't had any trouble with dandruff since I started using Comate."
—L.W., Galveston, Tex.
- "This formula is everything it not more than you say it is. I am very happy with what it's doing for my hair."
—T.J., Las Cruces, New Mexico
- "I find it stops the itch and retards the hair fall. I am thankful for the help it has given me in regard to the terrible itching."
—R.H., Philadelphia, Pa.
- "The bottle of Comate I got from you has done my hair so much good. My hair has been coming out and breaking off for about 21 years. It has improved so much."
—Mrs. J.E., Lisbon, Ga.

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not slanted so much at the fans—who I assume make their decisions to buy or not to buy any given book well in advance of magazine reviews—for the most part, but for the general reader. For those readers who may be interested in an occasional science-fiction book, but who have not the specialized knowledge or interest of the active fans. (These same readers may also be interested in a few fan magazines, or an occasional issue of a fan magazine here and there, but are not interested in covering the whole field of them.)

On the author-front, we have with us this time:

MILTON LESSER, whose novel, "Earthbound", was published by Winston, last year, and who has an anthology in the works. He's been around since 1950 as a professional, and was an active letter-writer during the 40's.

JOHN DANELAW, a new name to science-fiction readers, but not a "first", as he has authored numerous stories under a different name. (PS—The other name was not Kuttner, or any of his 57 varieties of pen-names.)

BRYCE WALTON, whose novelet in our last issue proved to be controversial, as I expected. He's been appearing steadily since 1945.

CHARLES A. STEARNS, who appeared in this June's issue of *Space Stories*, with a short tale called, "Affair of State", and who neglected to mention what other type of fiction he's been selling, but merely stated that he'd sold six stories this year, two of them science fiction.

CHARLES DYE, who continues to receive extreme reactions whenever we run one of his stories—an obvious indication that the gentleman has something there. (A poor writer gets only a few scattered boos, and loud silences.)

Letters

CAVIL WITH CLARESON

by Michael W. Elm

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

For some reason, science-fiction short stories make better reading than the longer lengths. Take last issue of your Quarterly, "Halt The Blue Star's Rising" was a promising title—said story lived up to promise, "Advice From Tomorrow" also seemed promising, a good story—though I guessed the whole thing was a hoax, and the end did not surprise me, tho it was a good one. (Funny thing about some STF...my noggin concentrates via maybe a subconscious application of known plot-formula and variant and presto! the solution tallies with mine. Maybe an idea for hyper-conception here...)

Now take novelettes. Walton and Garrett are competent writers, and you can expect a flare of originality; that's just the trouble. Rather rambunctious with their theses and imaginative application thereunto. Titles, equally, were ambiguous and not too salutatory from standpoint of reader's come-on. Garrett's title "Characteristics: Unusual" wasn't too hot. Reading the story, and not enthusiastically, I began to wonder what the author's main pitch was, also began wondering just how title applied. Same trouble with Walton's novelette, and the title "Dreadful Therapy" is dreadful. And just what was the basic theme of this script? I'll have to admit the 'Martians' fanooogling had me stumped as to motive, and their plans A, B and C did not clarify the theme at all. It seems both these stories were written too hurriedly (though the style would indicate otherwise)—or, either the material got out of hand or the stories were not carefully enough plotted beforehand. Confusion of another sort bothered me in "Common Time". The time element as depicted by Mr. Blish was confusing, though intriguing. And well might happen on an extraterrestrial trip to Centaurus! Of the three long stories, my vote goes to Mr. Blish's effort. And the temptation to quote a passage at the end of the tale is too strong to suppress: "...We are going to have to examine you just as thoroughly as we do the ship. If these beademungen wanted you to come back, they must have had a reason—and we have to know that reason." But this does not call for a sequel. In fact, this type of ending stands good enough by itself. The resolution of the hero not to go back—not to heed the wooing voices of the beings from the Centaurian perimiter—is perhaps the fitting end.

[Turn To Page 83]

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You bet I want to start my own extra-income business! Please rush FREE and postpaid my Powerful Selling Outfit—featuring Mason Jackets, Air-Cushion Shoes, other fast-selling specialties—so I can start making BIG MONEY right away!

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Dept. MA-163
Chippewa Falls, Wis.



Needham teetered toward the pit, moaning softly . . .



Everyone on Earth was some kind of neurotic — the Syndromats, which built in neuroses of the individual's choice guaranteed that. And every three months, people went to the Syndromats for a change of personality. What did it matter if the world was on the verge of totally unnecessary war? It didn't — except to a few who suddenly found that they had no neurotic syndrome at all . . .

THE IRRATIONALS

by Milton Lesser

(illustrated by Don Sibley)



GEOFFREY MARKHAM had the grandfather of all headaches. It pounded at his temples, plucked outrageously at the backs of his eyeballs, washed him over with waves of vertigo. That wasn't quite right. Sometimes you felt a little giddy after the Syndromat processed you for your new quarterly neuro-pattern, but it never left you feeling like this.

A clerk placed a sheaf of papers at Markham's elbow, and he thumbed through them, trying to get his eyes to focus. The first page bore this inscription:

Memorandum of War with South-earth, by Estes A. Needham, Presi-

dent, Northearth. For—Directors Aeronautics, Atomics, Economics, Civis Planning, Public Relations.

Gentlemen: This is dynamite! Shall we have a video conference at two this afternoon?

E. A. N., President, per L. K.

Markham looked at his chronometer, swore softly when he realized it was ten after two now, flicked the video-switch. In a moment, President Needham's square, thick-jowled face appeared on the screen. "Therefore, gentlemen," he was saying, "war with Southearth is now inevitable. Lord knows we've tried to prevent it. But I've given you the report of the Commission, essentially as it was handed to me just before the Second Solstice Syndrome Change. Any questions?"

Markham watched the screen grow hazy, saw the whorls of smoke chase each other across its surface. He wished he could concentrate, but his headache was a clamoring diversion.

The screen cleared, and the face of Charles Garth, Aeronautics Director, swam into view. "I'll need a minimum of three months to get things ready," Garth said; "that is, after this quarter is over."

"After!" President Needham barked, when his face appeared again. "That means six months in all. Why the hell do you need all that time, Garth?"

Garth shrugged. "Can't help it. No one told me what was going on, until today. So I took hysteria as my new neuro-pattern. I wanted to write a book on the Hysteria Syndrome and War. But you try running a war, the real thing, when you're a hysteric!"

"That's fine," President Needham told him. "That's just fine. Damn it, Garth, that'll give Southearth a three-month jump on us, and a single day could decide this war. There's no one can take your place, of course—"

Markham pressed a button, waited for the signal-light to blink on and

off over his screen. He said, "Why doesn't he pop right back into the Syndromat and change his neuro-pattern?" The words came out, seemingly, of their own volition. Markham sat there, looking foolish. No one "popped" back into the Syndromat at a whim. You had your quarterly change—four times a year—and that was it, even if destruction for all of Northearth hung in the balance. Why? Why couldn't someone change his mind? Because...because...there was no reason; that was just the way things worked. All at once, it seemed a little silly to Markham, and that frightened him. He never before had had these wild thoughts. And no one thought the Syndromat, or anything about it, was silly.

The Syndromat—glorious mechanical assurance of a richer life for mankind, a truly neurotic life, with all its fullness. Four changes yearly, four distinct neurotic viewpoints from which to see the world—that's what the Syndromat offered humanity. You didn't have to plod along uncertainly, insecure, unsure of your orientation, as men had in the old days. You knew your place, and it was the place of your choice—because you punched it out of the Syndrometabs each quarter. Then the machine took over, twisted through the labyrinth of your subconscious, selecting a facet here, a trait there, building your neuro-patterns anew the way you had dictated, altering the flow of pituitary secretions to assure the change.

That's what the Syndromat offered, Markham knew, and if there were some peculiar tabus and regulations regarding its use, so what? His headache might explain the meaningless solution he had offered. Yes, that was it, his headache. If he still felt that way tonight, he'd forget all about Deirdre's coming out party for the new quarter. Deirdre would be mad, but Deirdre would get over it.

PRESIDENT NEEDHAM'S face had returned to the screen, and he looked angry. "Markham," he said, "I don't have to tell you what a serious situation this is, but you insist on joking. After all, things just aren't done that way. Take me, now: you know what my neuro-pattern has been for the past three months, what it still is now? Altophobia, that's what; just a simple fear of heights, Markham. Fortunately, that sort of thing won't interfere with the war-effort. I've always maintained it's a good Syndrome, anyway; it offers a rich new strata of experience. You should try the fear of height some time, Markham. The fear is unique, and the relief from it is pure ecstasy.

"But that's beside the point. Point is, I'm lucky. This won't interfere, but Garth's neuro-pattern will. In that case, we're out of luck; we can just hope that Southeath doesn't strike first. Now, give your reports, gentlemen. Director Cole?"

Markham hardly listened. There was no way to prevent the flare-up of border incidents between Earth's two hemispheric nations, because the boundary split Earth equatorially, cutting indifferently across seas, islands, continents, through towns, swamps, jungles, farm land, cities. On either side of the border the forces of North and South were poised, and you couldn't prevent trouble, not when people had to orient anew, individually, to a new set of character traits every three months.

Markham lit a cigarette with trembling hands. He had done it again, criticized the Syndromat irrationally. Irrationally? He'd have thought that until today, but now, suddenly, he did not know. His criticism in each case seemed a valid one, one which more people should have made; and that was ridiculous, because no one criticized a perfect machine.

Markham crushed out his cigarette and held his head with both hands.

I'm going crazy, he thought. Not neurotic, because everyone's neurotic and should be. But psychotic—completely out of attunement.

But Syndromatically-induced neuroses precluded insanity. Then had he chosen the Hypochondria Syndrome this quarter? That could explain his worry. Wildly, Markham realized that he did not even remember which Syndrome he had chosen. The Amnesia Syndrome, then—was that it?

Mechanically, unaware of the words, he read aloud his own report on the ability of Northeath's "strip cities" to withstand fission and fusion bombardment. The strip cities, with their alternate patches of residential and business areas, were the only means, short of burrowing underground, to withstand atomic and hydrogenic destruction, at least partially. Yet each fission bomb would still take a hundred thousand lives with it in New Chicago or New Frisco; and each fusion bomb would obliterate thrice that many people.

Markham finished, snapped the video off while President Needham made his concluding remarks. They'd have to wait and face possible disaster because tradition said Garth couldn't alter his quarterly neuro-pattern. And more important than that, the war would be a fantastic ideological travesty, anyway. There wasn't any reason for it, not when Northeath and Southeath each rested on an identical bedrock of cultural parity.

Markham reached into a desk drawer, came up with a bottle of liquor, and took a long drink. It didn't make him feel much better. The fact still remained. Abruptly, because he had a headache and could not remember his new neuro-pattern, he had begun to question the Syndromat...

HE CROSSED the room to his public video set, dialed Deirdre's number, saw her statuesque blonde

good looks appear on the screen. "Geoff!" she cried. "It's good to see you, even before tonight. What time will you be at the party?"

"I'm not coming."

"You're kidding me. All our friends will be there, Geoff, with their new neuro-patterns. You know the old game. Everyone has to guess the new Syndromes—I'll bet I win, Geoff; I've got one this time which should fool everyone."

"I wasn't kidding, Deirdre; I'm not coming. I feel like hell. Kind of confused, too. I'll tell you about it sometime, maybe." But he wouldn't, not really, because the pending war with Southearth was still top-secret stuff—and would be, until Northearth was ready to hurl its legions across the border.

Deirdre pouted. "Then the party's just what you need, honey. Make it eight?"

Markham told her again, this time more firmly, that he very definitely was not coming. And Deirdre said, "Then I'll call the whole thing off, that's what I'll do. You just come on over, and we'll spend a nice quiet evening. By the time I pack you off home and to bed you'll feel like a new man. What say?"

Markham smiled; that sounded infinitely better. A restful evening, some wine, a symphony perhaps. Then back home and plenty of sleep, he'd like that. But whatever her particular neuro-pattern, Deirdre always had been the life of the party. She liked him a lot; Markham knew that. Still, he doubted that she'd call the party off—the big shebang which followed every quarterly change—just to spend the evening with him and make his head feel better.

He said, "Now it's my turn to ask if you're kidding."

"Nope. Dead serious, Geoff. When will you be here? Eight thirty? Swell."

She blew him a kiss, and her face faded from the screen.

Markham's office was on the fortieth floor of the Civics Administration building. He was the youngest of Northearth's Directors—at thirty-one, he hardly had been around long enough to have had a hand in the actual planning of the strip-cities. But as Director Civic Planning, it was his job to see how good they were and how bad, and how they could be improved.

Now he took the elevator down to street-level, pulled his coat collar up about his ears and stepped out into the street. He did not take the pneumotubes. He'd walk home, maybe that would clear his swirling brain.

The sun was setting early on this, one of the shortest days of the year. A bitter wind came howling in from the Lakefront, chasing up and down New Chicago's deserted streets, driving flurries of snow before it. Once Markham saw a woman, bundled in furs, fighting her way against the wind. And over there a dog, looking for shelter, howling piteously.

The woman turned a corner, was gone. The dog, perhaps finding shelter, had ceased its howling. Markham felt quite alone. The wind stung his face; the snow half-blinded him. He walked past the gaunt gray structure that housed New Chicago's Syndromat, closed now until the First Equinox. He shook his fist at it—a childish, futile gesture. Besides, whatever was wrong probably was wrong with him, and not with the Syndromat.

But shaking his fist made Markham feel good. Perversity, then—was that his syndrome? Was that what he had forgotten? People chose that, sometimes because they wanted a thorough re-orientation. They were fed up with their jobs, with their status in any one of a dozen ways. They selected perversity for three months and lived with it. A changed man would emerge by the time the next quarter

came, and he'd be ready for a new life.

Then, had Markham chosen that? But he was a logical man, and he knew at once he had no reason to desire perversity. Yet what could make him hate the Syndromat, blame it for the world's troubles and his own with a fierce new hatred he had never known before? Why should he suddenly doubt what he had accepted all the years of his life?

He had been to the Syndromat. The logical assumption, then, was that he had changed his syndrome, along with everyone else. And that left him nothing but his headache and his mushrooming doubts.

DEIRDRE'S great-grandparents had been among the earlier investors in the original Syndrome-cumulator, before the Syndromat itself became a world-wide institution. Deirdre had been left with more money than she could spend in one lifetime, had her sole aim been to throw lavish parties and do lavish things. And, Markham thought wryly, that almost seemed to be the case.

He felt much better now as he entered through the huge ornate gate of her estate. He had dined lightly in his own apartment, and then napped. His head still hurt, but only slightly. His steps quickened when he thought of a good symphony and some vintage wine, but he frowned when he saw the blaze of light that came from the windows, shining through the snow and carrying with it raucous music and laughter.

Some time ago, Deirdre had had the lock attuned to Markham's voice, and now he said the one word, "open." The door slid soundlessly up; Markham was hit by a wave of noise. He saw the revelers, drinking, dancing, laughing—threescore of them cavorting in Deirdre's restored twentieth-century "modern" house. Deirdre came came out of the crowd, ran to him, took his hands.

"Geoff," she said, kissing him lightly on the lips.

"What the hell's going on?" Markham was more than a little angry. "I thought you said there'd be no party. I thought—"

Deirdre's laughter tinkled. "You thought what? I don't know what gave you that idea, Geoff. No party! Tonight of all nights. My friends would never forgive me."

"Well, that's what you said. Just a quiet evening, you and I."

"When did I say that?"

"When I video'd you this afternoon."

"Video'd me?" Now Deirdre was frowning. "As a matter of fact, I was wondering why you didn't. Geoff—are you sure you feel all right?" Real concern was in her eyes, and for a moment Markham wondered. Was that just one more event in a pattern which seemed to indicate he was going mad?

His head swam. Deirdre stood there, smiling, waiting for his answer. "I—I'm sorry, Deirdre. No, I don't feel too well; I guess I won't be coming in, after all. Will you give my regards to everyone?"

Deirdre nodded, concern still in her eyes. "Take care of yourself, Geoff. Really. A rest, perhaps—"

A man came out of the crowd, youngish, soft, red-faced. He laughed, nodded to Markham, blew three kisses to Deirdre. "Hey, I've waited through three dances, and I don't want to have to wait till six. Will you dance with me?"

He bowed theatrically, three times.

Deirdre winked at Markham. "Poor Tom," she said. "It wasn't hard to guess his neuro-pattern; he's out of the running already."

"Yes, yes, yes," Tom said. "Now, come on."

"Obsessive compulsive," Deirdre called over her shoulder as she skipped back inside with the red-faced man.

"And three, the mystic number three, that's what he's selected. I guess there's some unique experience in it, at that; maybe I'll try it next quarter. Well, goodnight, Geoff."

It was still snowing, harder now. Markham cut back across business D and into Residential C, where his apartment was situated. He changed his mind halfway across the deserted business strip, went down the ramp to the pneumo-tubes, was whisked to his apartment building.

He took his coat off, snapped on the light, mechanically switched the lever for video replay to see if he had received any calls while he was out. The tube warmed up, but no face appeared. Odd, whoever had called preferred to remain invisible.

The voice was softly feminine, and Markham knew he never had heard it before. "Hello, Geoffrey Markham," the voice said. "If things seem strange to you, don't worry. That's understandable. Above all, don't do anything rash or foolish. Call R-17-11-C. R-17-11-C."

That was all. Markham scratched his head. Did someone know, somehow, of his plight. But how could that be—unless whatever had happened to him in the Syndromat had been planned. R-17-11-C, that would be in Residential C, his own district...

He punched out the number, waited. No answer. Impatiently, he got the video clerk, said:

"Could you tell me the address of R-17-11-C?"

Sing-song voice: "Sorry, sir; we are not permitted to reveal such information."

Irritably, Markham reached into his wallet for his identification card, held it in front of the screen.

"Oh. Director Civic Planning, eh? One moment, sir. Was that 11-C?"

Markham nodded, waited.

"Building 15, Third Crescent, sir. You take—"

"I know how to get there," Markham assured her. "And thanks."

He smoked two cigarettes, took a drink. He could call again, of course, but he wanted to see the woman, whoever she was, in person. If she knew something of this mystery, could help him...

At eleven, he put on his coat again. It crossed his mind that this was a ridiculous hour to go calling on a strange woman, particularly when she might not be in at all, when the whole thing might turn out to be a hoax, anyway. He shrugged.

The place was only three Crescents away, and he'd walk. Midway between the first and second Crescents, he realized someone was following him through the snow. He began to walk faster, then stopped suddenly in his tracks, turning around.

Three girls, young, in light furs, each carrying something in her hand. They came up fast.

"I thought it was a man," one of them said, smiling. She sounded more than a little drunk, but that was common enough on Second Solstice Eve.

"Well, what are we waiting for? If it's a man, and if no one's around—"

Their hands came up into the glare of a street light, and Markham stared, uninterested until now. They carried neuronc pistols, pointed straight at Markham—

"Hey, what's going on?" he demanded. "What do you think you're doing with those things?" A neuronc pistol couldn't kill you, but it tugged at the nerve-endings and warped them, causing excruciating agony in every fiber of your body. It was often used, Markham knew—although secretively—to obtain information from criminals.

"A mighty interesting neuro-pattern," one of the girls observed. "Guess what it is, old boy."

Markham frowned. "How should I know?" He turned to walk away.

Something clicked behind him, and

he felt a lance of fire tingle up his right leg. He started to run, hampered by drifts of snow that the wind from the lake had piled high. He cursed silently, knew their neuro-pattern now. Misanthropes—man haters. A woman chose that sometimes, if she had been the reverse of it the quarter before; and, like any other form of Syndromatic insanity, it went unchecked. They'd be detained by the Syndrome police if they were caught, but they were immune to punishment.

"You almost missed!" one of the girls laughed.

Of all the insane setups, Markham thought. The Syndromat was a machine not of good, but of evil, substituting for legitimate human experience something warped and often insane. It held mankind in check; there had been no real cultural advances since the coming of the Syndromat. Dimly, Markham knew that science had been on the verge of mighty things—of longevity perhaps, of god-like travel between the planets. But the Syndromat had curtailed everything.

He broke from his reverie too late. He started to run again, but tripped heavily on something hidden in the snow, fell on his face. He heard the clicking again, felt impossible pain stab at his chest, his arms, his face. He cried out—

"Man, you look at him writhel!"

"Again, the face. Again—"

The voices faded into a mumble. Mercifully, Markham's brain rejected the chaos of further pain. He felt nothing; he just lay there, helplessly, while his nervous system blocked the pain which might otherwise destroy his mind.

Something inside him almost smiled. He should be making preparations for war—for a war which did not have to be fought. But at least he should be preparing, because utter destruction of Northearth was the alternative. Garth, the Director Aeronautics, should be at

work, too—but Garth was a hopeless hysteric for another three months. And Markham's nerve-endings were being shattered because the Misanthropic Syndrome had struck the fancy of three young girls. Earth was a mad world, strung out hopelessly on the warp and woof of the Syndromat's lunatic tapestry...

The last thing he remembered was laughter, fading into the wind and snow. He tried to touch his left wrist, to turn the dial of his portap-phone to "on." An alert operator might catch it, might guess there was trouble. But his right hand was a mountain, and he had to move it by will-power alone. It crept across his body, slowly, a thing apart.

The neuronc pistol could not kill, but shock and exposure could. Slowly...

2



EVERYTHING was clean and white and antiseptic. Markham was weak, very weak, but he did not hurt any more.

"Oh. I see you're awake. I'll get Dr. Johnson." The nurse

disappeared through the doorway. In a moment the doctor came in, running. He halted in mid-stride, almost fell. "I thought you were about to die."

Markham smiled. "I hope I'm not dying, Doc."

"That isn't what I mean. The nurse said you were dying, so I came fast." He turned, called through the doorway, "Miss O'Hara?"

Timidly, the nurse entered. "Yes sir?"

"Why did you tell me this man was dying?"

"Did I tell you that? Umm-mm,

no; you must be mistaken, doctor."

Dr. Johnson shrugged. "What can you do? The Prevarication Syndrome, for some reason, is very popular this year, and particularly this quarter. Miss O'Hara is a liar; a common enough neuro-pattern, and quite harmless."

Markham chuckled. They considered it harmless. In a reversal of the situation, Miss O'Hara might have called a man well who urgently needed attention. Harmless—as harmless as the three girls, as harmless as Garth's malady.

"How long have I been here, Doc?"

"A week. We drugged you, used psycho-surgery to heal your brain. You're lucky, Markham. If you hadn't opened your porta-phone—well, another half hour might have been fatal."

"A week!"

"Yes. And it'll be another week before we let you out of our sight. But," the doctor smiled, "I'll be here all the time, you can bet on that. There was a lot of research to be done, so I tabbed out Agoraphobia for myself—you know, fear of open spaces. I can't go near the door, the window—can't think of going outside. I just work. Shrewd, huh?"

Well, it was and it wasn't. Just another instance of depravity, thought Markham. Man couldn't depend upon his own will and drive to keep him at work, not when the Syndromat made him a soft, stimuli-seeking creature. He had to shackle himself indoors with a device like this, thanks to the Syndromat.

"...so you're still far from well," Dr. Johnson was saying. "We'll have to know your neuro-pattern now, in order that reorientation treatment may stem from it."

Markham frowned. He could only go for so long without knowing what strange thing the Syndromat had done to him. He had to learn the truth sooner or later, and Dr. Johnson probably could help.

"Well," he said, "this may sound funny—but I don't remember."

"Then the shock of your experience must have erased the memory from your mind. We could give you exhaustive tests and learn it that way, Markham, but the records-bureau will be a lot quicker; I'll have it checked." The doctor turned on his heel, strode toward the door. "If you want anything," he called back, "just press the buzzer. And don't mind Miss O'Hara if she says some foolish things. Prevarication Syndrome, you know—"

MARKHAM was restless. It had been several hours since Dr. Johnson had gone to check his neuro-pattern with the bureau, and the nurse had brought him some broth, clear, tasteless stuff. He wolfed it down, but it hardly appeased his hunger, and when another nurse appeared she was astounded to learn that was all he had been fed. "Miss O'Hara," she said, smiling. "You can't blame her. It's all in fun, Markham, but I'll be checking all of her work from now on."

She brought him some colorful synthetics, and Markham ate them in silence. The hospital staff *could* function under the aegis of the Syndromat; but like everything else on Earth, it would function a lot better without it.

He wondered idly about R-17-11-C and the unknown woman. What did she have to tell him? He considered calling the number, then thought better of it. That at least still stood—he'd rather see the unknown woman in person, after they released him from the hospital. He could call Deirdre, because his week-long silence probably had worried her, but he was still a little angry about the party, and he decided against that too.

His office remained. He'd better call there, learn what had happened in the past week. The nurse wheeled in a video set, and Markham punched out the number. In a moment, his secretary's face appeared. She almost

screamed when she saw him. "Mr. Markham—where have you been?"

"Didn't the hospital notify you?"

"Hospital? What hospital?"

Markham smiled. He knew that if he asked nurse O'Hara about that, her answer would be a firm one. "Of course I notified your office. Didn't Dr. Johnson tell me to?" Naturally, she had not notified anyone.

"Never mind," Markham told his secretary. "It doesn't matter; I had an accident, that's all."

The woman seemed worried. "President Needham's been looking for you. He's called every day this week. I have a replay of the first call—want to hear it?"

Markham told her he did, waited while she put the spool in place. Soon her face faded, and President Needham's took its place. "...not in, eh? Well, tell him to call me at once. And leave this message, please. Markham—you can start recording here, miss—Markham, the government has to go underground. The strip cities will have to do for the rest of the country, because we haven't time, and since Director Garth can do nothing for three months, Southearth may strike first. I'll want all the records, plus the entire government staff, underground. That's a big job, Markham, but you'll get all the help you need.

"It's got to be an underground city that can function completely. Can you do it inside of two months, at least enough of framework to let us move in?" President Needham chuckled. "It'll play hob with my altophobia—my height-fear. But what's got to be done has got to be done, eh? Call me, Markham."

The secretary's face swam back into view. "That's it, sir. But he's called every day."

Markham thanked her, cut the connection. Two months—an underground city in eight weeks, it was quite an order.

He reached for the tabs again, to

call Needham. But Dr. Johnson strode into the room frowning.

"Put that video dial down," he said. "Put it down and listen." He was breathless.

"Sure, only make it fast. I have an important call to make."

"You don't understand, Markham. I don't think you'll be making any calls. I've already notified the Syndrome Police."

"THE SYNDIES?" Markham said, using the popular term for them. "What's the matter?"

The doctor answered with a question of his own. "How do you feel?"

"Well, I was weak at first, but it went away fast—"

Dr. Johnson shook his head. "I don't mean that. We kept you in a drugged state and strengthened you. But that's not what I mean. How do you feel—mentally?"

"Why—fine." Markham saw no reason to tell the doctor of his confusion.

Dr. Johnson sat down and studied the floor. "I might as well tell it to you straight. You have no Syndrome, Markham. No neuro-pattern. I can't understand it, because in that case you should be a gibbering idiot. No neuro-pattern..."

Everything had led Markham in that direction, that was the logical conclusion he should have drawn. Something had gone wrong in the Syndromat, had stripped him of his past quarterly neuro-pattern without installing a new one. Yet he had rejected the idea. You were taught that you could not live without a neuro-pattern. Markham felt naked.

Still...

Markham said, "You can see I'm not acting like an idiot."

"Umm-mm. Well, you're probably dangerous." Dr. Johnson wagged his head. "It's remarkable. According to the records bureau you went to the Syndromat. You stripped off your old

neuro-pattern. You punched the tabs for a new one, amusement-compulsive, I believe, but nothing happened. You know what the Syndrome Police think, Markham? They think that the circuits were tampered with. Someone unknown did not want you to receive your new Syndrome. Someone unknown—for an unknown reason."

Markham thought of the girl whose video number was R-17-11-C. Could she shed some light on what had happened. Well, he'd have to see her, and soon. For now, he felt amused by the whole situation. A week ago, he'd have shuddered at the thought of being left with no Syndrome. Now—

"I should be acting like an idiot, eh Doc?"

Dr. Johnson nodded.

"What did you say *your* neuro-pattern was?"

"Agoraphobia. I can't stand open spaces. I have to stay indoors."

"I see." Markham got up, strode to the window. The room was on the ground floor, facing a broad, sunlit plaza spotted with dirty patches of snow. "Come here, Doc."

Suddenly, Markham had to prove his point. It might be cruel, but if he could show the doctor, pointedly, who behaved like an idiot...

Markham crossed the room quickly, got behind Dr. Johnson, shoved the man's left arm up and back.

"Hey! Cut it out—you're hurting me."

"If you don't move where I want you to," Markham yanked the arm, "I can break it. Like this—"

Grunting, Markham pushed his prisoner to the window. Holding him immobile, he threw the window open with his own right arm, felt crisp, cold air blow into the room.

Dr. Johnson was very pale. "Stop. Please stop."

"Go ahead," Markham said cheerfully. "Look outside." He forced the man forward, pushed his head and shoulders out across the sill.

Dr. Johnson screamed, beat on the sill with his right hand. He screamed and screamed...

Markham let him go, watched him fling himself, sobbing, on the bed.

"See? A neurotic fear, like a lot of other people. An irrational fear of something quite harmless. Some others are different—they have strange drives, compulsions—also groundless. Do I? Have I anything like that? I tell you, Doc, I'm the only normal man in the city—"

Dr. Johnson tried to compose himself. He still was a sorry sight, trembling, pale, sweating. But now he laughed. "If that isn't a sign of insanity, plain and simple, I don't know what is. The only normal man, eh? And everyone else is against you, eh? Persecuting you, perhaps. To prove it to yourself, you had to take a normal person, like me, with a perfectly acceptable Syndrome, and subject him to danger. I'm going to recommend to the Syndrome Police that they confine you, as a distinct threat to society, until the quarter is over."

"That won't be necessary." Three Syndies stood in the doorway in their bright green uniforms. "We saw what happened, Dr. Johnson. And you're right—he's dangerous. He'll be confined, with or without your recommendation."

MARKHAM was feeling better all the time. Their behavior was illogical. The logical thing to do, provided he actually did pose a threat to society, was to reprocess him through the Syndromat. But irrational tradition said that could not be done. Instead he must be confined. "You can't take me," he said.

"Is that so? Why not?"

"I'm Director Civic Planning—"

"We know that. And a useful member of society, too—when you're normal. Well, in three months—"

"You don't understand; I've been

commissioned by President Needham to do a special job."

The Syndie smiled. "What's the difference? Don't you know your law, Markham? The President's executive powers extend into all facets of society, except one. He has no jurisdiction over the Syndrome police. They can veto him—which is exactly what we'll do in this case."

Markham knew that was true. Yet two things told him quite clearly he could not be confined. First, he had to supervise the construction of an underground city. That couldn't wait—thanks to Charles Garth's hysteria. And further, Markham wanted no part of the Syndromat. If they took him, they'd confine him for three months, then put him through the machine at the beginning of the next quarter.

He'd fight that to the bitter end. He wore no neurotic mask now, nothing to hide him from society or hide society from himself. And he did not want to put the mask on again, the irrational, blinding mask which told you everything was as it should be in a ridiculous farce of civilization.

The first Syndie came forward. "All right, you're coming with us."

Markham shrugged. "I know when I'm licked," he said. He walked toward them, slowly. Suddenly, he began to run. He bowled over the first Syndie, shouldered aside the other two, stood clear in the hallway. He heard cursing behind him, glanced back and saw a Syndie wobbling erect in the doorway, neuronc pistol in his hand.

He ran. Something hissed close by. A neuronc beam tingled up and down the length of his arm. Close—it hardly had touched him. He ducked down another corridor, heard footsteps pounding behind him.

He plunged down a ramp, reached the basement, followed at a run the red arrows which led to the pneumo-station. Vaulting over the rail near the ticket-booth, he dove into a waiting

pneumo-car, slammed the compartment door shut and punched the tabs.

He was in his apartment-building in three minutes, in his own quarters in four.

He was about as safe here as an obsolete strato-rocket on a target range. Stripping out of his sleeping tunic, he got into a fresh jumper and overcoat, ran downramp to the pneumo-tubes. The mysterious girl in The Third Crescent would have to wait, because the activity had made him ravenously hungry.

DEIRDRE seemed very surprised to see him, but glad too. "Talk about your missing persons," she told him. "Where on earth have you been?"

He said it was a long story that he might tell her at some other time, but right now he was hungry.

Deirdre video'd Autofood, ordered thick steaks with all the trimmings, then said: "I've missed you."

"I—" Markham began, but then the door chimes sounded. "Autofood?" He wanted to know. "So quick?"

"I doubt it. Umm-mm, hear those chimes? Three times—I'll bet that's Tom Avery."

"Well, can you tell him you're busy?" Dimly, Markham remembered the red-faced obsessive-compulsive.

"Don't be silly, Geoff; I was expecting him. You barged in without warning, and Tom's a good friend. I can't tell him that." Markham heard the door sliding up. "Well hiya, old number three."

"How's the girl, Deirdre?"

They came in, and Markham stood up to be introduced. "You remember Geoff Markham, don't you Tom? Geoff—Tom."

Avery's face got redder. He sat down heavily. "My God, that *is* Markham."

"Yes, and you look like you've seen a ghost," Deirdre laughed.

"Don't you watch the video newscasts?"

"No. No—why should I? If you mean Geoff's in some kind of trouble, I suspected as much. But he's among friends now."

"Do you know what kind of trouble?"

"No-o."

Markham stood up. "Forget it. I was just leaving."

Deirdre pushed him back down into his chair. "I said you were among friends. Now, what is it, Tom?"

"Well—you won't believe this—but Markham has no Syndrome." Avery mopped his brow with a damp handkerchief. "It's the truth, I saw it on video. They're looking all over the city for him."

"No Syndrome?" Deirdre gasped. "Why, that's impossible. Everyone has a neuro-pattern..."

"I don't," Markham told her, getting up again. "That's part of the long story."

"Then maybe you'd better let the Syndies take you, Geoff."

"No. If you're afraid to keep me here just long enough to eat, I'll go."

"I didn't say that. No Syndrome, umm-mm. How do you feel, Geoff?"

He smiled. Why did everyone always ask him that? He felt fine, and he told her so.

The chimes sounded again, and Deirdre skipped to the door, calling back: "That'll be Autofood. We'll divide the steaks three ways."

It was, but Markham wondered idly why Deirdre spent such a long time out in the hall with the delivery-boy. When she returned, Deirdre was wheeling a tray before her.

"Why didn't you let the boy bring it in?" Avery asked.

"Oh, he was in a hurry. Yes—in a hurry."

Markham frowned as they sat down to eat. In a hurry—then why did he take so long in the hall? Something was wrong, he sensed that. But then he chuckled softly. He'd be running from shadows if he kept this up.

"...so," Deirdre was saying, "if Geoff doesn't want to surrender to the Syndies, he must know what the score is."

Avery grumbled something under his breath, and then the door chimes rang once more.

"Just like Central Pneumo Station," Deirdre laughed, getting up. "I'll only be a minute."

She disappeared through the hall, and Markham heard voices. She returned in a moment, not smiling.

Behind her were half a dozen Syndies, their neuronics pistols ready.

3



MARKHAM'S cell was a well-furnished room, but it was a cell nevertheless, because there were bars on the window and the door was locked from the outside. He did not understand Deirdre.

She had lied to him, told him if he did not want to turn himself in, it was perfectly all right with her. Yet she had given an urgent message to the Autofood boy, he had informed the Syndies, and now Markham paced back and forth helplessly in his cell. He couldn't figure her motives out, but he'd better file them away for future reference, he realized, because they might prove vital later.

Meanwhile, he was in a pretty fix. The key man in Civic Planning, his presence would be a necessity for any underground construction. It couldn't wait—Southearth's atomics might scatter government records and government personnel all over the face of the land without notice.

The days rolled by ponderously. He was brought good food by an assortment of Syndie guards. He asked for music and got it, piped in with perfect

tone fidelity. Yet he felt as restless as the dominant theme in Franck's *D Minor Symphony*, his favorite. He read voraciously, but the books dealt with normal people with normal neuro-patterns, and their conflicts seemed unreal and artificial like everything else in the world.

Two weeks after his confinement began, Markham was brought his meals by a new guard—a stocky, balding Syndie with generous lips and a long nose. At first the guard did not try to talk, and one day Markham was surprised when he sat down after delivering his tray of synthetics.

"Aren't you going to do anything about getting out of here, Markham?"

Markham was surprised, and he didn't hide it. "What the hell can I do? I haven't even got a toothpick."

"Do you remember a number, Markham—and an address? R-17-11-C, Fifteenth Building, Third Crescent?"

"I remember."

"Well, if I arrange—uh, for you to leave, you've got to promise me one thing."

"Brother, if you can do that, I'd promise you the moon."

The guard chuckled softly. "Well, you never know. Listen: you go there at once. No delays, nothing else matters. You've got to forget any personal business."

Suddenly, Markham was suspicious. "What's in it for you?"

"Don't be egotistical, Markham. Don't go around thinking you're the only one in Northearth without a Syndrome."

"Huh?"

"I thought that would get a rise out of you. But it doesn't matter now. Will you promise?"

Markham said that he would.

"Okay. Tonight, at about nine, the lights will go off. A power-failure, Markham; none of the electronic locks in the building will work—"

Markham smiled grimly. "Then I can just walk out."

"Well, not quite. When the lights go off, you can bet the guards will be scurrying all over the place. You can't make any mistakes, because all I'm doing is throwing the main power-switch. At a guess, it will take the guards six minutes to reach the generators, assuming they decide to check them at once. That gives you from nine to nine-o-six. Is everything clear?"

Markham nodded. "Except that I don't see where you fit in."

"There's an old saying about a gift horse or something, my friend. Remember, nine o'clock."

And he was gone.

Markham swore silently to himself. He'd feel much better about everything if someone could tell him what was going on.

EIGHT-FIFTY-SEVEN. Markham tried the door. Too soon—damn it, he'd forgotten that the lights would go off first. His palms were sweating.

He lay back on the bed, lacing his fingers behind his head. He wondered if his chronometer were slow.

Eight-fifty-nine. Nothing to indicate that anything was amiss. Perhaps the guard's Syndrome was Prevarication. If he had lied, if this turned out to be an elaborate joke...

Nine.

The room was plunged into darkness, so quickly that Markham almost couldn't believe it. He crossed to the door, fingered the catch. The door slid up into the ceiling.

He ran outside—into blackness. He ran, his left hand brushing the wall, then brushing nothing. A cross-corridor. But which to take... No, it was straight ahead, a long way ahead, with an l-shaped bend just before the exit. Several cross-corridors first. His hand found the wall again. Mustn't get nervous.

He ran.

Confusion in the passages now. Voices shouting. Feet slapping against

plasti-steel. Up ahead, a light. A man carrying a hand-torch. The light stabbed at Markham, caught him, pinned him there, half-blinding.

"Say—you're in detention. You're—"

He dove head-first under the light, felt his shoulder come into jarring contact with something, heard an oath. The hand-torch swung up in a wild arc, illuminated the ceiling for a moment, then plunged down toward him. He tried to roll with the blow, but it caught the side of his head, staggered him.

He fought for the torch, got it somehow, struck out with it. The guard moaned and fell away from him. Markham stood up groggily, took the torch and snapped its beam off.

Then he was running again.

Once he snapped the torch on, glanced swiftly at his chronometer. Nine-o-four. Two minutes—two minutes left—

He found the l-shaped bend in the corridor, plunged ahead.

Near the door, torches were lit. Two guards stood there in the dim light, pacing nervously. Markham was still in darkness.

He crept forward now, slowly, aware that we each second ticking by his chances for escape decreased. A dozen feet now, half a dozen...

He lit his torch, threw its light full in one guard's face. The man stepped back, hands to eyes, and Markham lashed out with his fist at the other guard, catching him flush on the jaw staggering him. But the first guard took out a neuronic pistol, was firing it wildly while he yelled for help.

Markham ignored him. He had ratcheted his light to full intensity and the man still was blinded. A scream—the wide neuronic swath swept down on the other guard.

Markham's hands trembled on the catch. Up went the door, slowly, a third of the way. ...And then all the

lights in New Chicago seemed to blaze anew.

"There he is—"

Markham got down on his belly, slithered under the door. He felt hands pawing at him, gripping his legs. He kicked clear, stood up outside in the cold night air of New Chicago.

He lost the guards in an alley, then went quickly to the pneumo-station.

THE THIRD crescent turned out to be on the fringe of a business district. Building Fifteen was a public gymnasium.

Markham walked up to the receptionist's desk. "Who runs this place?"

The girl looked at him. "You have an appointment?"

"No-o. But—"

"Lou Porter is in charge."

"Well, tell him I'm here."

"Tell *him*, eh? Do you—ah, know Lou Porter?"

"No, not really. Tell him Geoffrey Markham is here."

"Of course." The receptionist spoke into a box on her desk. "There's a Geoffrey Markham here—what? Certainly."

She seemed very surprised. "Lou Porter says you should go right up. Across the main gym floor, Mr. Markham, then up the ramp. First door on your left."

Markham strode out across the floor of the huge gymnasium, saw several hundred sweating men and women hard at work. Probably, most of them were Physical-compulsives who had decided, at the end of the previous quarter, that they were growing soft. Compulsion to do physical activity was their new quarterly answer, but Markham did not like it. Will-power became a meaningless term, because the Syndromat could do it all for you.

Here were a dozen women at one of the new mechanical muscle-toners, and there a score of men struggled through an artificial environment of two g's, every movement a painful one.

Instructors were plentiful—scrawny little men for the most part, who, Markham thought with a smile, had almost been dehydrated by years in the humid air of the gymnasium.

Markham found the ramp, ascended it. The door to the first room on the left stood half-way up on its runners.

The girl stood up from her desk, brushing some papers aside. She was short and dark and pretty in her azure jumper—not glamorous like blonde and statuesque Deirdre, but nice to look at in a simple homespun way you didn't see much of in New Chicago these days.

"You're Markham," she said, extending her hand.

"Don't tell me you're Lou Porter?"

"Uh-huh. Short for Lucile, Mr. Markham. Won't you sit down?"

He did. "Look. I just have one question to ask."

"What's that?"

"What in hell is going on?"

She laughed, softly—said nothing.

"I went to the Syndromat," Markham told her, "got erased but didn't get a new pattern. I was told it was no accident. I got a call from you, and I've been trying to meet you ever since. But I had an accident, woke up in the hospital, was to be sent to detention. I escaped, but a friend pulled a neat and dirty trick and I spent a couple of weeks in prison. Tonight a guard arranged for my escape, told me to come here. I'd have come anyway. Now, what's going on?"

Lou Porter was still smiling. "First let me ask you a question. You have no Syndrome now, right? Wait—that's not it. I know you don't. I arranged it. But, being free of any neuro-pattern, what do you think of the world?"

Markham saw no reason why he shouldn't tell her the truth. "I don't like it," he said. He went on to tell her of his confusion, of his contempt for the Syndromat and everything concerned with it. She was good to talk to, and when he finished he found

himself calling her Lou quite naturally.

SHE GOT up, came to him, squeezed his hand compulsively. "Good. That's what we hoped for, Geoff. We need you—"

"Who's we?"

"I think our man Applebee—you know, the guard? —I think he told you you're not the only pattern-free man in Northearth. Right?"

Markham nodded.

"But what you don't know is this: there are thousand of us. A whole organization, working slowly over the years, planning, dreaming..."

Abruptly, her tone changed—no longer wistful now, but all business.

"Geoff, did you ever hear rumors of a spaceship being built out West?"

"Sure. But if they're true, it's probably a cult of Mono-syndromes who have a compulsion for space-travel. So what?"

"No, it's not. Look: after the destruction of the twentieth century wars, the world was faced with insanity. People were afraid to congregate in cities—more hydrogenic destruction might spew from the sky."

"I know the history," Markham assured her. "Some politicians got the bright idea to break the half-shattered tradition of East against West. With half the population gone, with governments reduced to anarchy by the crumbling ruin of civilization, it was easy. The North-South arrangement was born."

"At the same time," Lou went on for him, "someone invented the Syndrome-cumulator. It swept the world like flash-fire; it couldn't miss. People wanted to live the way they always had lived, but they were afraid. Mass neurosis was common, and, if it couldn't be fought, the next best thing was to give it to all humanity. It wouldn't be peculiar if everyone had it—and with the neuro-patterns to keep them busy, the people could forget all about war.

"It worked for a while, and the Syndrome-cumulator became the Syndromat. Civilization was rebuilt in a hurry, but it was warped. The Syndromat became the keynote, and it helped exaggerate minor border clashes between North and South. What was human free will? It just didn't exist with the Syndromat. Unwittingly, man had become more a slave to the Syndromat than he ever was to any totalitarian government. And that's where we come in.

"We have men in high government circles, Geoff. We know what's going on. A week, a month—there'll be war. Too blinded by the Syndromat, the people won't be able to stop it. Suicide for Earth—it looks that way.

"But we want no part of it. We're near space-travel now—man has been, for two hundred years. We want out, Geoff."

Markham stood up, took a scented cigarette when Lou offered it to him. "It sounds awfully melodramatic, like some of the lurid fantasies I've read. You mean you're going to fly away and never come back?"

"Not at all. We'll go. Our scientists tell us we can live on Mars for a time. Like Spartans, because it's a cold, bleak, dying planet, but we can live there. For the duration of the war, Geoff. We can't fight that: the war's an inevitable by-product of the Syndromat. But the war will do one good thing; it will destroy most of the Syndromats. Maybe the people left will be burrowing in caves again, I don't know. But we'll come back, and we'll try to bring civilization back with us, real civilization, the way it was meant to be in the mid twentieth century, before war cut it short."

"I see. But what do you need me for?"

"That's easy. You're top man in architecture. You'll have to plan our temporary city on Mars."

IT SOUNDED silly. On Mars. Just like that. No fanfare: they were going to Mars, thousands of them, across an impossible gulf of space to another planet. It might have rated a minor human-interest piece at the end of a video-cast, had the world known. With the Syndromat, such things just weren't so important.

It would be easy, Markham knew. He could leave with them and forget all his worries. A hunted criminal—hell, there'd be no such things as Syndies in a few months or years, after he came back. He could forget all about that. Could he?

Could he forget Estes Needham, President of Northearth, who wanted an underground sanctuary? A sanctuary which might offer some glimmerings of sanity in an insane world? If he had been merely a common citizen, it would have been different. But now he was a man with a job to do—one which he alone could accomplish. Could he simply run away from it?

He told all that to Lou, quietly, without heat. Patiently, for he knew they needed him to construct another city, unthinkable remote.

She took a long while before answering. Finally: "Get one thing straight, Geoff. We're not running away, not turning our backs. Just withdrawing and returning, because it's the only way we can raise the old Earth out of chaos. There's no fastness we can retreat to here on this planet, not with your strip-cities spread all over, not with hydrogenic destruction. Not a one of us is expendable, Geoff. We're all needed as the seed for new sanity—as you're needed. . ."

Markham spread his hands out wide. "What can I do? They want me here. If I can help them, how can I refuse? Anyway, how do I know all of you aren't just another Mono-Syndrome cult, despite what you say?" He didn't believe it himself, but it was a straw to grasp.

She laughed. "As a matter of fact, you'd be surprised how many actual cultists there are who want to build a stripped by hypnosis, and we send weed them out. Their memories are stripped by hypnosis, and we send them packing. But you know that's not the answer for all of us."

He nodded. "I know. But—no, Lou. I can't do it. Hell, I don't know. I'm all confused..."

"I didn't expect your answer at once. Here, let me show you something."

She took his hand, led him to the far wall of the room. There she pressed a button and the wall faded, became translucent, then as transparent as a sheet of tinted glass. As an architect, Markham was familiar with the principle of shifting polarization, but it always made him blink.

"Half of us are in the New Mexico county, Geoff—at an old place called White Sands. The rest of us are here, and this gym is a front for another type of gymnasium. Take a look, Geoff: this isn't any hare-brained fly-by-night scheme."

He looked. The now-transparent wall jutted out over a balcony. Below it seethed a mass of activity.

"Orientation," Lou explained. "See those men there—"

Markham stared. In the strong light, their faces were like twisted, pliable rubber. They sat motionless, but they struggled.

"A new device," Lou told him. "Much simpler than the centrifuge. Those men are undergoing the pressure of five gravities right now, Geoff. It hurts, but they'll have to withstand it in spaceflight before *Brennschluss* is reached, and after deceleration sets in. They're being conditioned. Or here—"

Another group stood huddled together in a glass-enclosed area, alternately taking on and putting off little rubber masks. They seemed very uncomfortable.

"It's cold on Mars, and the air is

thin. They're learning to take it. Of course, outside the dome we'll construct—you'll construct—they'll need oxygen masks. But they're learning how to live without them for minutes at a time, because it may be necessary."

Lou pressed the button again, and the wall shifted back from transparency to rosy translucency to an opaque barrier. "The rest of us are in White Sands, finishing the ship. There's still a lot of work to be done, too much, maybe. You can almost feel the war breathing down the back of your neck. We've got to get out first, because if we don't, if we can't get out and then return when catastrophe plays itself out—well, I don't think humanity will have another chance."

She looked up into his eyes, imploring; came closer to him, put a small hand on each of his shoulders. "Will you come with us, Geoff?"

He bent forward and kissed her. He didn't know why, it seemed the most natural thing in the world to do. He stepped back, his face crimsoning. "I'm sorry. I don't know why—"

"I'm not. Im not sorry at all." She brushed her lips lightly across his cheek. "Funny," she mused, "in spite of everything, if you feel attracted to someone, suddenly—"

He held her for a moment, then released her. "We're normal, Lou. You and I, a couple of normal people the way men and women were normal two hundred years ago. I like you. I could—"

"You could what, Geoff?"

"I—nothing. Don't ask me to come with you, Lou. Not now. Because if you do, I'll have to say no."

She seemed hurt. She pouted, and somehow he sensed it was not merely because he had not been fired with their plan. "Then you won't go?"

"I didn't say that. I don't know; I have a job to do first. Maybe I'm wrong. I don't know, Lou. Then—well, if you haven't left yet, and if you still want me to come..."

"We'll want you. I said that we needed you. And I—" Abruptly, she was all business again. "The gymnasium closes in a week, and we'll all be going to White Sands. You won't know when we're leaving. There'll be no announcement, no publicity. Nothing. A month, perhaps less."

Markham turned to go, a hollow ache inside his chest. "We'll let it go at that," he said. "I'll see you, Lou. Somehow, I really think I'll see you again."

"Will you?" She was still pouting. She followed him to the door and he half-turned to kiss her, but she averted her head. "Goodbye, Geoff."

He walked back down the ramp and across the public gymnasium. Afflicted with certain Syndromes, he knew, people could fall in love with no provocation at all. But he lacked a neuro-pattern entirely, and so did Lou. Well, it was understandable. Love, that couldn't be possible, not so suddenly. A pretty girl, a dreamer, a refuge from the whole city turned against him. Attraction, yes. But love, wasn't love something else?

He felt very much alone as he walked across the gym floor, watching the Physical-compulsives filing out now that it was eleven o'clock and closing time. The scrawny instructors looked like insects scurrying around and carting the apparatus away.

4



THE PIT was gouged out of the living rock fifty miles south of New Chicago. Atomic blasting loosened the bedrock, sent it tumbling in on itself. Then the Physical-compulsive crews went to work, a hundred thousand strong—and Markham

smiled in spite of himself. Neurosis was good for at least that much. The Physical-compulsives would work fourteen hours a day quite cheerfully.

The President's cabinet came first, by strato-jet, and a few days later Estes Needham arrived himself, by ground car. He looked weary and somehow different, not the laughing, thick-jowled man Markham had known.

"I'd have arrived sooner," Needham apologized, "but there's my Altophobia. Couldn't come by jet, Geoff. So this is the pit—"

He stood with Markham on the administration balcony, gazing down upon the scurrying dots of men far below in the chasm. He turned away, sweating. "Sorry, Geoff, but I can't look. My height-fear..."

Markham shrugged. "We'll be able to take you down sooner than you think. Two more weeks, I'd say. When the city's finished, it will be a labyrinth of tunnels cutting out in all directions from the bottom. There'll be another entrance, five miles to the south. Small, obscure, it can be used in case of emergency."

Needham mopped his brow. "Only one thing bothers me. They want you—the Syndies. It's strange, but I've finally resigned myself to that: I won't let them take you, because you'll have to finish the job. But how come the Syndies haven't been here?"

Markham was surprised. He'd have thought Needham would be too hide-bound by Syndromatic dogma to feel that way. "Estes," he said, "you've got to fight fire with fire. What happened when your car approached?"

"Why, there was a whole hierarchy of guards who had to pass me through. Grim fellows, and big."

"Uh-huh. And the Syndies can't fight 'em. There've been a few skirmishes in the three weeks we've been here, but the Syndies just aren't strong enough. I think they've given up."

Charles Garth came out on the balcony. The big dark man seemed distraught, but he always looked that way, cloaked by the Hysteria Syndrome. "I don't like it," he whined. "I don't like it. Everything's going too nicely. Trouble's coming, mark my words."

The Aeronautics Director was a nuisance, Markham realized, but he insisted on being around during construction. Now Markham struck him soundly on the back. "Charlie, I have a job for you."

Garth looked hurt. "You're joking; everyone's always making fun of me. What the devil could I do?"

"No, I'm serious. I'd like you to conduct Estes on a tour, show him around downstairs. Okay?"

Garth grinned, then the smile spread across his face. "Yes. Thank you, thank you. I can do that, sure. Come, Estes." He was still laughing foolishly when he led the President to an idle elevator, and for a moment Markham watched it whisk them down, then he turned and stalked inside.

"Good morning," Deirdre said. "I came over early to give you breakfast. They tell me you've been going on synth tablets most of the time, Geoff. That's no good."

A WEEK BEFORE, Deirdre had arrived by helicopter. Markham was busy, but he couldn't get rid of her. She took her place among the women administrators, in their living quarters, but her function here at the pit, as it materialized, was an odd one. A self-styled liason-expert, she shuttled back and forth in her helicopter between New Chicago and the pit, keeping Markham abreast of the world outside.

Or, Markham thought, dividing her time between himself and Tom Avery. But oddly, he found that he did not care. When he was tired and his thoughts strayed far from his work, it was not Deirdre he saw in his mind,

but a gay, laughing Lou Porter. He tried to see Lou that way, he imagined that's the way she would be, at another time. And because he liked the feeling they gave him, he often let his mind toy with those fancies.

"Hey, snap out of it! I said I brought you breakfast."

Markham shook his head, mumbled thanks under his breath. He sat down to a glass of juice, a platter of ham and eggs, a cup of coffee. Deirdre smiled. "You never had it so good. Do you like the way I cook, Geoff?"

Markham was feeling mean. He rationalized, told himself it was because of the grind, but why did he see Lou's pert face all the time? "Is that a proposal?" he said.

"Geoff! You can make a girl feel awful silly. All I said was do you like the way—"

"Skip it."

"No. I don't want to. Maybe you're right, Geoff. Next Syndrome Change I can select any pattern I like. Just name it, and—"

And that, he knew, was the answer, even provided all other things had been equal. He could never return again to the Syndromat and what it stood for. Deirdre could never leave it. He liked things that way, because it made them simple. If he tried to view objectively the emotions which Deirdre stirred within him, he knew they wouldn't add up to love, not the kind of love a man wants to have for his wife. Still, habit was a hard thing to break, and for so long he had paraded through the world of the Syndromat, hand in hand with Deirdre...

There could have been a different world, a much better world, with Lou. Chill winds and dry shifting ochre sands, yes—but what of it? Mars, he remembered dimly, was the ancients' god of war. Of love, it could have been that for Lou and himself.

He chuckled softly. Wasn't he being premature? He hardly knew the girl, and just because she had responded to his kisses... And yet some-

times the best things in life could happen that way, suddenly, devastatingly, in one swift sweep, mocking the slower, stodgy folk who had to plod along. He laughed again. Lou was on her way to White Sands, to Mars...

"What's funny?"

"Huh? Nothing. Nothing, Deirdre. Damn it, can't a man have some private thoughts?"

"I'm sorry. But you're so—strange."

He took her in his arms objectively. He had to see, once and for all, whether any embers of the old fire still smouldered. He kissed her, savagely.

It left him cold.

She moved away first. She must have sensed it, he thought. "I'll go into the city now, Geoff." She turned her face away. "Is there anything you need? Anything, that is, that I can get my hands on?"

He shook his head, watched as she walked out to the landing field. She took the helicopter up gracefully, like everything else she did. *For Tom Avery, perhaps*, Markham thought. *Not for me. I need a woman who does not have to turn to the Syndromat for pleasure, who can even live happily for a time on shifting ochre sands.*

He watched until the helicopter was a dot against the bright blue sky.

THAT AFTERNOON, there was an accident. Not the sort of thing you can prevent when work was a frenzied, scrabbling, clawing thing which you had to push all the time. One of the branch-tunnels had gone ahead too rapidly and even the plastisteel struts couldn't hold the roof of earth above it. Three men had been killed in the cave-in, and it meant a week's work on this particular section gone to pot.

Chalkins, the construction engineer, was a sour-faced, tireless Physical-compulsive. "Sorry, boss," he muttered, when Markham came down personally to inspect the damage.

"Okay, okay," Markham shrugged.

"It couldn't be helped, I guess. Did you hear anything from Fennister?"

"Fennister? Oh, you mean crew J, the guys digging the small entrance five miles down?"

Markham nodded.

"Yeah, I did. Two, three days ago. Fennister called in, said they might be finished inside of a week. I dunno."

Markham watched Chalkins, bare-chested and sweating, holler his men back to work, roaring like a dozen brass-throated giants. Then Markham took the elevator back to ground level.

A guard was waiting for him. "Glad you're here, Mr. Markham. We forced down a 'copter that couldn't identify itself. Pilot's waiting inside. A girl."

Markham ran through the hall to the administration lounge. Not Deirdre. Deirdre's helicopter the guards knew, and besides, she would have signalled properly—

"Hello, Geoff," Lou said.

"Hello."

"The Syndies are furious about this; you should see them. They want you and they can't get you."

Markham said he knew.

"I waited till the last possible instant, Geoff. Most everyone left for the New Mexic County after a week, but a skeleton crew remained to cart away the equipment. Now they're gone too. I'm leaving and—Geoff, must we be like the Syndies? Wanting you and not being able to get you? And I—"

"Nothing's changed," he told her slowly. "I'd like to go." He smiled at his own understatement: everything within him cried out for him to go. "Still, I—this comes first, that's all. After, well, if you haven't left yet, after this is over—" He spread his hands out wide.

"It'll be too late. We've got a timetable. Then, then I guess this is goodbye, Geoff?"

Her lips were quivering. Slightly, but just enough for him to notice. He said, "Say, can you wait a few hours?"

Just a few. I'd like to show you around, spend some time with you..."

She took his hand, and her own was warm and comfortable. "Why not? Certainly I can. There's still a week, and I can get there in two days. All right, Geoff, the party's on you."

Markham ushered her back into his own office, broke the seal on a bottle of wine with his thumb nail. They had a couple of drinks, toasting both the underground city and the spaceship, laughing and chattering meaninglessly.

IT WAS while he showed Lou around the administration building that Deirdre returned with two strangers.

Markham sighed. Always, there was something to spoil things, no matter how hard you tried to avoid it. "Lou Porter," he said wearily, "Deirdre Fuller."

The women smiled at each other, Deirdre coldly, Lou with genuine interest. "Who are these two?" Markham asked the blonde girl, who seemed strangely nervous.

Deirdre laughed disarmingly. "Oh, don't worry about them; they're friends."

Markham grunted, waited to be introduced.

The strangers moved so fast that they almost seemed to be in rapport with one another. One moment they stood there, relaxed, smiling vacantly. The next, each held a neuronc pistol in her hand.

Deirdre was still laughing. "Friends," she said. "Ah, but whose?"

One of the men said, "You're under arrest, Markham."

"A couple of Syndies," Lou wailed. "That's what they are."

Markham was bewildered. Perhaps Deirdre had sensed her final rejection, but still, would she give him up maliciously to the Syndrome Police, knowing how much he wanted to continue his work? Would she do that to a man she loved?

"Stop looking like a kid who just lost his favorite toy," Deirdre sneered. "It's time you learned the facts of

life, Geoff. Want to guess about my Syndrome now?"

"Go to hell," Markham told her.

"Well, I'll let you know anyway." She tittered foolishly. "I took two this quarter. Not one, anybody can do that—but two complete neuro-patterns. Fun—I haven't had so much fun in years. Perversity for one, Geoff. So I'm contrary. I liked you once. I can't now, not with this pattern."

Markham had to know the rest of it. "And the other?"

"Prevarication. It's so popular this quarter. I'm a liar, what they call a pathological liar. There—"

Markham wasn't listening any longer. That could explain so much—the party which Deirdre had called off, but really hadn't called off at all; the Syndie trap in her own house, her forward behavior this morning, when she always had been aloof and beckoning at best. All a joke, a monstrous joke. Syndrome-motivated, every bit of it, and not illogical at all when you looked at it that way.

But the mask was off. And Deirdre leered, ugly now. She was a symbol for Markham, a personification of the Syndromat and everything about it. Almost, he had learned that in time. But what did it matter now, with neuronc pistols pointing the way back to detention?

They motioned him outside to the balcony. From there they could take the path to the parking field and their helicopter. But President Needham stood on the balcony, his back to the parapet, talking to Garth.

"What's going on?" Needham wanted to know.

One of the men told him, curtly, "We're Syndrome Police."

"You can't take him. Don't you know who this man is? He's needed here, sorely needed, I tell you—"

"Neuronc pistols!" Garth whimpered hysterically.

Needham came forward. "Put those

things away. Put them away. This man—"

"Shut up."

"Do you know who you're talking to? I'm—"

"I told you to shut up," one of the Syndies yelled. He reached out with a big hand, shoved Needham away.

The President stumbled back, spun about—and gazed out over the tremendous chasm. He stood on its edge a moment, where no railing had been built because there was no time to build unnecessary things like railings.

A normal man would have pulled himself away. But his height-fear gripped Needham, swayed him like a sappling in a gale, toward the pit. He teetered there briefly, moaning.

Then he fell.

They watched his body plummet down, twisting end over end.

Lou shuddered, clinging to Markham for support. Deirdre turned away and hid her face. Garth was screaming over and over again, a thin piercing wail.

Someone ran out on the balcony, and for a moment Markham hardly saw him. The Syndies motioned the man back, but he was calling Markham's name. "They're here! My God, they're here—"

"I know it," Markham told him, too tired, too shocked to think straight. "Don't you see their pistols?"

"No. No—Southeath! They hit Newston, New St. Loo, New Looville. They're coming. New Chicago called, said they'll blast the pit..."

IT WAS like a nightmare. Things just didn't happen that way—they didn't pile up one on top of the other until everything was reduced to a mad, chaotic impossibility. Deirdre's revelation, the Syndies, Needham, now Southeath with its strato-bombers. It almost struck Markham like something out of an insipid video show.

Overhead, a barely audible droning. And tiny specks, almost invisible in the early spring sunlight.

The Syndies were running for their helicopter, Deirdre following, glancing fearfully at the sky. They disappeared up the path toward the parking field.

Lou grabbed Markham's arm. "We can use my 'copter—"

"No. We wouldn't stand a chance; the concussion would get us. We'll have to go down, into the tunnels. Quick, now."

Sirens burped their peremptory warnings as Markham took the girl's hand. "What about him?" she asked, pointing to Garth.

He sat in a huddled heap, mumbling to himself. One of the Syndies had dropped his gun, and he toyed with it idly. "Let's go, Charlie," Markham said. "You're coming with us."

Garth shook his head. "I must stay and guard the balcony. Yes, that is what I must do, guard the balcony." Froth flecked the corners of his mouth.

"You're coming with us."

Garth waved the neuronc pistol. "Keep away, I warn you. I must guard the balcony so no one else comes out here and falls."

"He'll use it," Lou said. "He'll use the pistol if we try to take him."

Markham looked at the man. Not a man now, a broken hulk, his mind shattered hopelessly by the Hysteria Syndrome. He took Lou's hand, and they ran to the elevator.

Chalkins met them at the bottom. "I don't know what to do," he said. "They're all running around, yelling, screaming. They won't listen."

Markham saw them, the frenzied mob of workers.

"Get them inside," he ordered. "Get them into the tunnels and make them keep running as far as they can go. Fusion bombs can't penetrate far underground—no explosive can do that. But get them in there, fast."

"I'll try, but—"

Markham turned, ran with Lou into one of the gaping tunnel mouths. They ran until they found one of the track-cars, and Markham pumped

them along the rails vigorously.

Three miles, four—he couldn't be sure. Winding, twisting passages, feeble overhead illumination here and there, but dark for the most part.

The tracks ended. They got off the little car which was more a platform on wheels than anything else. They ran further into the tunnel. "There's another exit," Markham panted. "I—don't—know if it's—been finished—yet. We—can hope."

Lou was about to say something, Markham remembered that much. But the sound which burst on his ears was a hundred fierce thunderstorms rolled into one, a wild, discordant cosmic destruction. Then his senses rebelled. The sound came in a quick blast, and more rolled up behind it, crest upon crest. After the first roar he heard nothing but a vague whistling inside his head.

Something shoved them about crazily, titted the walls, took the ceiling and threw it beneath them for a moment, then righted it again.

They pitched from wall to wall before they fell together. Dimly, Markham was aware of sheltering Lou, of bending over her, of sneezing as the rock-dust spewed down all about them. The damp floor shook, tumbled them to one of the walls, held them against it like a giant hand.

Markham thought Lou was screaming...

5



EVERYTHING was very quiet. Darkness enveloped him completely, but that was secondary. The silence was a tomb, close around him on all sides.

Then Lou's voice, utterly without echo.

Flat. "Geoff?"

He stirred. He got to his hands and

knees, then stood up. "Here I am, Lou."

Her hand groped out of the darkness, held his. "You've been unconscious a long time."

"How long?" He said that, but he knew it was a foolish question. Suddenly, he felt thirsty; his mouth was parched, so parched that he found it hard to talk. And he was hungry.

"I don't know, Geoff. But I feel like I can eat a whole side of beef without any trouble at all."

Two days, perhaps. A guess. But he was very weak. He began to walk, still holding Lou's hand.

"Geoff?"

"What?"

"Are we—buried?" She sounded frightened, like a little girl.

He knew they could have been. The explosion could have trapped them in an underground pocket. "I don't know," he said. "There's another exit, and we came several miles. We should be near it now."

"It's funny. I wanted to reach the stars, but I may be buried under the Earth instead. Sometimes it's a long way up, Geoff."

Her hand was trembling in his. She began to cry, softly, and he pulled her close. He held her against him, stroking her hair briefly. Then he pushed her away and led her by her hand. She followed him without a word.

They reached a wall of rock and rubble. For a time he felt about, probing, pushing, listening as his efforts tumbled some of the smaller rocks from their places. He might as well have tried to move a mountain.

"The other way," he grunted. "Come on."

They retraced their steps. The floor was rough and uneven, spotted with boulders. Sometimes their way was easy, sometimes Markham had to force his wide shoulders through a narrow neck of rock. And once he thought he couldn't do it. He stood

there, half way through, aware of great jagged rocks on each side.

Lou gave a little laugh and pushed him. "Why aren't you small, like me?"

She pushed again, and Markham made a concert of their efforts. Dust floated down all around him and once a rock high above rumbled dangerously. But he stood clear on the other side, and Lou followed him.

It seemed an endless march. Nothing but the beat of his heart and Lou's hand, dry and almost feverish, in his. They walked, stumbled, clawed their way forward.

It was Lou who felt it first. "Geoff—wait."

"What is it?" Secretly, he thought they were buried. But he would not tell the girl. He'd walk until he could walk no more. Only then would it be time to think of dying.

"I—I think I feel a breeze."

He paused in his tracks, his heart pounding furiously. It could have been her imagination. Could have been—no... He was aware of it too, ruffling the air almost imperceptibly, fanning his stiff limbs with the faintest suggestion of coolness.

They ran. Once Lou stumbled and Markham helped her to her feet, helped her hobble along. She was whimpering a little, and he turned to soothe her.

He saw her face, dimly. He mumbled over and over again, "I see you. I can see you. I see—"

It grew lighter. Their passage was a twisted, broken fantasy of tumbled rock and fallen earth.

Lighter.

SUNLIGHT blazed ahead now, bringing with it a cool, stiff breeze. They reached the opening, stumbled out upon a wild, chaotic pile of broken, shattered masonry. In the sunlight.

Not bright, really. Overhead, the sky was obscured by a pall of ugly

red-gray smoke, drooping tired, dying fingers onto their hill. They stood and watched it for a time, saw the sun smouldering high above.

Lou pouted, turning away.

Markham laughed. "Hey, what's the matter? We're free—"

"Yes," she said. "Yes. Now you can go back and see if you can save something from your pit. You can—"

He had been thinking about it, in the back of his mind. Needham was dead. Garth was dead. The government had been caught in its pit. Dead—all dead.

Not the military, no. Their bombs and strato-jets were stock-piled all over the face of the land. Doubtlessly, they'd been sent with destruction to Southearth, each base-commander marshalling his forces, shooting them Southward with fire and death.

As for Northearth, Markham knew that those cities which had not been levelled only lived on borrowed time. The jets would come again, slaughtering. Was this, then, the death-knell of civilization?

"Geoff. Geoff, I know. You're thinking that this is the end, aren't you? The end of everything?"

He nodded.

"It isn't. Don't you see? We're still here—my people out in White Sands, in the desert. It was secret, and it wasn't a target area. They won't be hit. We can start all over again, preserving culture, history, life—everything. On Mars. And later, when all the fury kills itself off, we can return. That's the plan, Geoff. And you're part of it. You always have been. You can build for us..."

There was nothing left here. He had done what he could, and so he felt better for that. The men and women left would be a clawing, frenzied mob, without rule, without order. That was not part of Earth, the old Earth he had tried to save. It had been a mockery, anyway. What did he want to save, what could he have rescued with his underground city,

had he been successful? Government, yes—and the Syndromat with it. Wasn't Lou's way better? Now that the city had failed, he was free to think that. And would be, for as long as he wanted...

"Lou," he said, "I'm hungry. I think we'd better find something to eat."

"You're changing the subject." She pouted again.

She had rock-dust in her hair. Her clothing was torn and dirty, her face covered with dirt and grime. But he took her to him, held her tight against him. "Sure," he said in her ear. "I'm changing the subject. We're going to find something to eat, then we're going to rest. After that, I think we'll get started for White Sands."

With a glad little squeal, she kissed his brow, his eyes, his cheeks. Then she stepped back critically. "Geoff, you should see yourself." She laughed. "You look awful."

The broken pile of masonry had been a smaller administration building, here at the other end of the tunnel. The surface blast had converted it to rubble, but at this distance Markham realized it was safe from any lethal radioactivity. They dug their way in through the rocks and Lou found what they sought.

"Was this place a kitchen?"

"Damn right. And a storehouse, too. They had enough food here to feed an army."

Humming a gay tune, Lou began to throw the cans and boxes back up to him. They had quite a pile before she stopped.

Markham pried the soft metal open with a knife. They had fruit juices and milk to quench their thirst, pre-cooked meats and vegetables to appease their hunger.

Markham stood up. He wasn't tired any longer. He felt good. He could almost walk all the way to White Sands.

"Listen," Lou told him. "There's a

town four or five miles south of here, isn't there?"

He nodded.

"Well, why don't we see if we can find a 'copter—wait! No, don't bother asking me if I'm tired. Of course I am. I could sleep for a week, but I won't do a thing about it until we're on our way to White Sands. You ready?"

Smiling, Markham got together a small pile of food, enough for five days if they ate lightly. He found a thick piece of colorful cloth, smiled grimly when he realized it had been a woman's evening cape. He tied the food into a bundle with the cloth, slung it over his shoulder. "Let's go," he said.

THEY REACHED the town by nightfall, a small community which, for its size, had been immune to attack. But the pall of smoke hung over it, and the people milled into the streets, muttering among themselves.

A toothless old man prodded Markham's shoulder. "Strangers, eh? Refugees from New Chicago?"

Markham shook his head.

"Well, there ain't many. Video reports said almost everyone died. Dozen hydrogen bombs—*kla-boop!* No more people. Video also said we roared down south of the border, gave hell to 'em. We're winning, I think. But then the damned video went off. My wife says nobody's going to win, we'll all die. You never know, eh young feller?"

"Has this town a 'copter field?"

"Sure thing. Finest in the area, but what the devil you want to go there for? You can have all the 'copters you want, I guess. No one's got anyplace to go."

A bell clanged, mournfully. It startled Markham.

The old man grinned. "Don't let that worry you. Just the old church bell. Means it's time."

"Time for what?" Lou wanted to know.

"Why, they've stacked our food and stuff in cellars. We're all going to live down there till we win the war, 'cepting when we gotta pop into the Syndromat. Good idea, huh? But then, we got us a shrewd mayor here in Blandings. I'll see you. Got to help my family get arranged downstairs."

"Help them?" Lou demanded. "Aren't you going?"

"Nope. Drat the luck. There are three of us like me here in Blandings, so we'll stay up top to give warning in case an attack comes. We hada be smart, we hada choose the Claustrophobia Syndrome this quarter. I could just see myself going underground, afraid of being closed in. Well, I'll see you—"

He hobbled away, muttering to himself. For a moment Markham watched as the townsfolk scurried into their underground shelters. After a time the old man came back, climbed to the top of a high tower. He looked very lonely in the gathering darkness, but he waved cheerfully enough.

The town was deserted.

They made their way through the empty streets and then across a broad flat plain to the 'copter field. It was utterly silent. They entered the flight building, switched on the lights. Markham opened his bundle, and they ate a little of their food, drank water from the office cooler—which no longer worked. The water was warm, but good.

"Here's the keyboard," Markham grinned. "Take your pick."

Half a hundred ignition keys, each

with the owner's name carefully attached, were spread out on the wall before them. Markham selected a handful at random. "Let's find which one of these 'copters looks best," he called over his shoulder as he trotted out on the field.

Lou followed him at a run, and together they found a sleek new Haverford, and Markham checked his keys, discovered the one for the Haverford's ignition. "How's it look?" he said.

Lou hopped up and inside, came out again smiling from ear to ear. "Fine," she said. "If this doesn't get us to White Sands in time, I don't know what will."

Markham ran back to the office, got a map. For a few moments they studied it together, deciding upon their course. This way, and this...then through the mountains here, and on over the desert to the New Mexico County...White Sands in a day and a half...

They took the 'copter up as the final glimmer of sunlight disappeared from the sullen shroud overhead. By morning, maybe they'd outrun the pall altogether and find a bright, rosy dawn awaiting them.

Yes, they'd get to White Sands in time. And to Mars. *Out of the ashes of a tired, rotten civilization which has gone wrong*, thought Markham, *we can build...*

He sent Lou hustling arearships and to bed, and then he wondered what the first dawn on Mars would look like.



The Department Science-Fictionists Demanded

INSIDE SCIENCE FICTION

by Robert A. Madle

Now appears in the current issue of

FUTURE SCIENCE FICTION and DYNAMIC SCIENCE FICTION

Let us face the facts in this case without equivocation: the story of Mercury Bill is sheer nonsense — but we think you'll love it!



MERCURY BILL AND THE AMOROUS HUNK

by Charles A. Stearns

(illustrated by Milton Luros)

ROMANCE can happen to anybody, but you take a man as worldly and space-wise as Mercury William Stevenson; with Hell practically staring him in the face, he could get the idea that Eros (the god, not the moon) was picking on him. But it was not Eros who got him into trouble; it was his eyes, and the peculiar effect they sometimes had on people.

There was this subtle quality about the eyes of Mercury Bill: you never would have noticed that were slightly crossed unless you rubbed noses with him, or became, otherwise, very familiar.

Marjune Connaly, his girl-friend, who was addicted to nose-rubbing, made this discovery with a delicate horror, and now Marjune was no longer interested in rubbing noses. Marjune had drawn back, her own ultramarine eyes widening, and had said, "Well, really Bill; I never noticed that before!"

Then she had seemed cool and distant, Mercury Bill had said something a trifle nasty, Marjune had replied in kind, and they were no longer speaking. Perhaps Marjune had even envisioned cross-eyed babies.

Now, having stomped off to Mars, and being two-thirds of the way back home, Mercury Bill was shrouded in the black nimbus of his own bitterness and lounging within the control bubble of the star-freighter, *Silver Titan*. Wallowing, practically, in an orgy of self-pity.

The *Silver Titan*, taking constant tri-dimensional fixes on Saturn, Rigel and Vega, automatically within her intelligent guts, kept to her ever-changing great-circle course around Sol and scorned his assistance, so that he had nothing to do, unhappily, except brood.

A certain relay, above his head, clamored its warning twice before he heard it. *Danger! Foreign matter approaching!*

And then he looked out and saw the Hunk for the first time.

It was less than half a mile off his starboard beam, hanging in relative motionlessness beside him, darkly glinting in the light of the portside sun, like a big lump of coal.

He determined its distance, measured it with his sextant, and found it to be about one hundred yards in diameter. It was pursuing a parallel course; there was no danger. Still, the strong displacement of his gravimeter worried him. The Hunk had to be very heavy, made up of some very dense element.

He observed it for half a million miles. Not only did its course remain parallel, but its velocity, as well, seemed to be the same as his own, for it neither gained upon him, nor dropped behind. Finally, losing interest, he took a nap.

When he awoke, four hours later, the Hunk was still with him, but it was no longer standing off at half a mile. It was less than a hundred feet from the *Silver Titan*, and edging closer every minute!

IT STARTLED him momentarily, but he was not really alarmed. He made a small vertical adjustment in his course, and leveled off a quarter of a mile above his initial plane.

Presently the Hunk hove into view, slowly rising into his viewplate like a dark, minor moon.

"I be damned!" Mercury Bill said, and changed course again.

Again the Hunk changed courses with him. It was still edging nearer, too. Perhaps a sudden burst of speed—though he dared not waste too much fuel in maneuvers.

He tried it, but to no avail. Lagging brought the same result. The Hunk lagged too. It swerved ever inward until he could have reached out and touched it with his hand. Then, with a gentle clang, it fastened itself to his hull.

He found that he could resume his

course only with difficulty, and the moment he stopped lateral acceleration he lost control completely. Red lights flashed on the control panel. He was three degrees off course, and swerving in toward the sun.

He glanced at his chart. Mars would be shut off from radio contact by the curve of the sun, but he should be able to contact Earth by now.

He flicked on the transmitter and made his call.

Earth came in weakly.

"This is *Silver Titan*," Mercury Bill said. "Position vector forty-six degrees twenty three minutes and four seconds celestial latitude; one-seventy three degrees oh six and a half longitude, vertical distance seventy two point eight three to the third power. Mayday! Mayday!"

"What is your trouble, *Silver Titan*?"

"A hunk of rock has fastened itself to my hull, and I can't seem to shake it. It's heavy as hell, and forcing me off course. Can you suggest anything?"

"How massive?"

"Five or ten million tons. It's black and uneven, but too heavy for obsidian."

"It must have an iron core," Earth said. "Reverse your ship's field and see if it falls off."

Mercury Bill tried it. "No good, it still hangs on. It must be something besides ordinary magnetism holding it on me."

A moment of silence from Earth. "We can't suggest anything else at the moment. Are you in immediate danger?"

"Swerving in toward the sun," Mercury Bill said. "If I don't pull out of this in a few hours, I never will."

"Hang on. We'll send a ship with a tractor-beam, but it'll be twelve hours or more. Meanwhile, try to maintain your course as nearly as possible. We'll keep track of you with radar."

"Right," said Mercury Bill cheerfully. "Meanwhile I'll be trying to

think of a way to get rid of this hunk."

A metallic voice came strongly into his earphones at that point. "*You never shall!*" the voice said.

"What? Who's cutting in on us, Earth? Who is this?"

"How's that?" Earth said.

"*I love you madly,*" the voice said.

"*I shall never leave you.*"

"**LOOK HERE,**" Mercury Bill said, "some joker is barging in on our conversation, operator. Speak up out there. Who are you? Where are you? Identify yourself, dammit."

"*I am right here.*"

"Where?"

"Beside you—my darling."

"What is this?" the Earth operator screamed faintly. "Who in the hell are you calling 'darling', *Silver Titan*?"

"That wasn't me," Mercury Bill said. "Get off the ether for a minute, Earth; you're just complicating things. I'll contact you as soon as I find out what's going on."

"*I have crossed a universe to find you, my dear, and now that we are together at last, you must not be angry. You must fly with me to the stars.*"

"Am I nuts," said Mercury Bill slowly, "or is there somebody in or on that hunk of rock hanging alongside of me?"

There was a momentary pause. The earphones whined and crackled. "I suppose," the Hunk said doubtfully, "that one might say that I am *in* me, in a manner of speaking, as the consciousness is housed within the physical manifestation (you follow me?), but I am certainly not a hunk of rock. Nor am I iron, nor anything else that you have called me. I can not say precisely what I *do* consist of, but I am sure that it is something else. I seldom waste time on introspection, for it breeds loneliness, and my life has been lonely enough as it is, through the aeons of searching for one of my own kind—until now, my lovely one!" The voice brightened.

"You mean you're a—living organism?" strangled Mercury Bill. "How are you getting through to me? How can you speak my language?"

"Language?" the Hunk said. "Why, there is only one universal language, which varies, I consider, only in the manner of communication. I have superimposed my own thought waves upon your stronger transmission wave. Is that so strange?"

"What do you want from me?"

"How can you ask?" the Hunk said, in a wounded voice. "We were meant for each other. We were—"

"*Hello, Silver Titan. This is Earth. This is Earth calling. Come in, Silver Titan.*"

"Here," said Mercury Bill. "What do you want?"

"Your employer, Delesseps Grisley, wishes to communicate with you."

"Ain't I got enough trouble?" Mercury Bill sighed. "Put him on."

"Hello, Mr. Stevenson, this is Grisley. What are you trying to pull, Stevenson?"

"What am I trying to pull? Why you ass, I'm not trying to pull anything, except get away from here and get home. You think I'm trying to steal this old beat-up crate from you?"

"You needn't be nasty about it," Grisley said. "It just sounds a little fishy to me, that's all."

"Shut up and leave me alone. Go back and sit on your big fat overstuffed chair until I get there."

"Alas," the Hunk said, "that my own true love should wish to desert me!"

"What's that?" Grisley yelled.

"Nothing," Mercury Bill said. "Now scram off the ether." He suddenly found himself unable to cope with life for the first time since he could remember. He was a man who could take it as it was dished out, but things had now become too outrageous for a mortal to endure.

He wished he had a stiff drink. He

went to the locker and got himself one. Then another. He felt better, and went back to his transmitter.

"Look here, Hunk," he said. "I don't know what you are, or where you come from, but you're making a big mistake hanging around here. Evidently you're a conscious, telepathic thing, but whatever it is you're thinking is being hammed up in my receiver and coming out plumb crazy. Now, I've got an idea that what you're really trying to express is a *physical* attraction of metal for metal, and it's being translated in my receiver—or my brain—into gushy English. There is a difference between magnetic attraction, you know, and love. So shove off, and let's get back on our respective courses, and go our ways. Otherwise we're liable to plunge right into the sun, and that'll be the end of us."

"What difference?" the Hunk said. "Huh?"

"What is the difference between attraction and love?"

"Well, I—"

"Your reasoning is faulty. That is too bad. However, you are first semi-intelligent mass that I ever encountered, and so I have fallen in love with you as a matter of natural law. But this is not physical, my darling. It is a meeting of minds. I had hoped that you would be sufficiently advanced to realize that the entire universe is based upon a single principle of attraction of atom for atom and mass for mass. It is this principle within the cosmic disturbance known as space and time, that goes to make up the universe itself.

"No; this is the very purest emotion which I feel for you, and which you must learn to feel for me. I say that we must always be together. I shall be selfish, and never let you go. You are very beautiful, did you know that?"

"I've got to have another drink," Mercury Bill said.

THE HUNK seemed to be waiting for his answer. "You ponder?" the Hunk said presently.

"I sure do," Mercury Bill said.

"There is still time. Will you go with me?"

"That's out of the question," Mercury Bill said. "If you must know, I've got a girl-friend. Her name is Marjune, and she's got a hell of a lot better shape than you have."

"Then know your fate," the Hunk said. "I will never yield you up to another. We will continue inward until we plunge into the surface of that little sun over there. Together we shall go into it, and we shall emerge as one. We shall be fused together. Thus nothing can ever separate us from each other again."

"We'll be changed into rarified gas, quicker than you can bat an eye," Mercury Bill said. "That little sun is hot."

"Ah well! The *state* of one's matter is not important. The form is nothing."

Thinking again of Marjune, Mercury Bill disagreed. He put through a call to Earth again.

Earth was pretty worked up about him by this time. They had rung in the space force and half the brass in the government. All of them were listening in.

"Listen," Mercury Bill said. "This crazy thing is *alive*, get it? It thinks it's in love with me. That's what I said! We're heading into the sun, and there's nothing I can do about it. In about nine and a half hours, at the present course, we'll be into the point of no return, so you've got to get that rescue ship here before then, you hear? Otherwise, don't bother."

"The ship from Earth can't be there in less than twelve hours. There is a patrol ship in that area, however. We'll try to contact it."

He heard them calling the patrol ship. It answered at last. It was less than twenty million miles away—near

enough. But it was dead and would not be repaired for two days.

His last chance was gone. By rough calculations, Mercury Bill figured that he had about eight hours left to live.

UNDER ABSOLUTE sentence of death he felt strangely calm. Within the *Silver Titan* the temperature was inexorably rising in spite of the cooling system. The sun was an angry red giant, completely filling the port view window. He had been near death before, and before it had always excited him to utmost efforts to preserve his life, for he loved life.

Now it was different. There was not a chance; there was not even anything to fight. He had been through all the different possibilities of escape and none of them offered any hope. He had tried reasoning, cajolery, pleading, and bluff. He had considered turning his guns on the Hunk, but that was impossible so long as it was nestling alongside of him. He had thought of putting on his suit and bailing out into space. He could keep alive a few hours longer that way—but to what avail?

Calmness held, and he contacted Earth again.

"Hello, *Silver Titan*," Earth said. "Where are you now? Can we do anything for you?"

"Too late," Mercury Bill said. "My number is up. My little friend and I will be taking a nose-dive into the sun in a few hours. But I'd like to talk to a few people while I'm waiting, if you don't mind."

"Of course," Earth said. "Anyone at all. The frequency has been cleared for you. We are all for you. With whom do you wish to speak?"

"First," Mercury Bill said, "I've a little property. I'd like to make a will. I want to talk to my lawyer. Also I'd like to speak to my mother and father for a moment. I *don't* want to be hooked up with old Delesseps Grisley, though. Get that straight. I'd also like

to talk to—oh, never mind. That's all."

They got the lawyer first. It is always easier to get a lawyer than anyone else. It seemed odd to Mercury Bill to be discussing legal matters over a hundred million miles of space with a man you never would see again, concerning things which could no longer make any conceivable difference to you. Still, it passed the time away.

Later on he talked to his mother and father. His mother cried, but his father's voice sounded strong and fine. He said goodbye, and his mother said for him to take care of himself. He replied soberly that he would.

There was a faint moisture upon his brow when he finished this part of it.

Earth station came in with a request. "There is someone else who wishes to talk with you," the operator said.

"Grisley? I told you I wouldn't talk to him. I would rather talk to this damned hunk of rock than with Grisley. At least it's friendly."

"Not Grisley. It is a Mr. Martin. The sales vice president of the Mammoth Foods Corporation."

"What the hell?"

"Shall we put him on?"

"Go ahead," Mercury Bill said.

"This is Abraham Martin. We would like you to endorse the Mammoth soups for us, Mr. Stevenson."

"Are you crazy?"

"Not at all. In the last few hours you have become the most famous, the most talked-about person on Earth—or should I say, *from* Earth. All we want you to do is to give a testimonial. To say that you are eating a bowl of Mammoth soup while you're waiting for the end. You know how I mean. A great big, hot, delicious bowl of our soup, with—"

"You can go to hell. I should eat soup, with the temperature in this crate already better than a hundred and thirty degrees?"

"You only have to *say* it, Mr. Stevenson. At eleven o'clock they are

going to broadcast your signal over a world-wide network. It will mean sixteen thousand dollars—payable to your inheritors, of course."

"Twenty-five thousand," said Mercury Bill.

"Done. We haven't time to argue."

The radio hissed and howled for a moment. The operator was no longer coming through clearly. The radiation from the sun must be very strong here. No man had been so near to it, and lived to tell of it. Mercury Bill looked out at his black, sinister companion and shook his head. It was listening, he knew, to every word that was being spoken. It irritated him; it was like having someone read over your shoulder.

"...somebody else," Earth was saying. "Can you still read me, *Silver Titan*?"

"Go ahead," Mercury Bill said.

"Hello, hello, Bill!" said the voice of Marjune Connaly.

"MARJUNE?" he said. He couldn't believe it.

"Yes, yes!" (She was crying. Now that was strange! Why should she be crying?) "I love you, I love you, Mercury Bill!" Her voice was so faint that he could hardly catch the words.

"Who is that?" broke in the voice of the Hunk, irritably.

"Shut up, you perambulating boulder!" Mercury Bill said. "Marjune, Marjune, honey, can you hear me?"

"I can hear you."

"I love you too, Marjune."

He listened to her cry into his earphones. The Hunk kept mumbling to itself, making transmission worse. He could hardly make out her words.

"Will you be quiet!" Mercury Bill said. "No, no. Not you, Marjune... No, Marjune; you don't understand, sweetheart. I *can't* turn around and come back... I don't give a damn what Grisley says. I'm not crazy, either. Thanks, Marjune. This is it, and we've just got to face it, but now

that it's all right with us, that makes it easier... It was all my fault. Yes it was... The hell it *was*! No, Marjune. No. I *am* cross-eyed. Cross-eyed as a Martian Eedle bird. Aw, Marjune, honey!"

A pause. "What—what?" He couldn't have heard her right, and yet her words were perfectly clear.

Mercury Bill sighed. "Yes, Marjune," he said, huskily. "Yes, I *will* marry you—and bless you, Marjune."

"You *are* emotional!" the Hunk said. "Your thoughts are so jumbled that I can hardly make them out. It distresses me that we are no longer in rapport. These last moments could have been so treasured by me."

"I am not your type," said Mercury Bill, with grim satisfaction.

The Hunk made a strange, bereaved noise within his earphones. He knew that it was not really making such a noise at all, of course, but its mental anguish was being so translated by his audio system. "Shall I lose you now?" the Hunk said dramatically. "So beautiful, so sleek, so swift among the stars? No! I have hungered for companionship too long. We shall wed in a fiery union, down *there*." Presumably it made a mental gesture toward the sun.

Somewhere within the subconscious of Mercury Bill the ghost of an idea was sparked at that moment. A disturbing idea, because to the condemned and hopeless, the rebirth of hope is always painful. It was the merest fragment of a thought, and he could not fan it into flame, try as he would. He could not grasp its essence now, and later would be too late. Still it aggravated his unrest. There was something wrong; something he had overlooked that might possible have saved him...

"*Silver Titan, Silver Titan. This is Earth. Are you still alive? We can no longer make out your blip against*

the sun with our radar. Come in if you're still there."

"This is *Silver Titan*," Mercury Bill said. "Has my bride-to-be got back with the justice of the peace yet?"

"No, *Silver Titan*, but I have a message from your employers."

"So?"

"Mr. Grisley says if you don't get back on course and bring your ship home, you are fired, and what is more, he intends to prosecute for grand theft."

Mercury Bill said something appropriate.

"Please, Mr. Stevenson; you're now being broadcast all over Earth, right into the homes of millions of people. You must be careful of your language."

"How cozy!"

"There is also a message from Abraham Martin, of Mammoth Foods Corporation. He requests that you broadcast the testimonial soon, before transmission becomes too bad."

"You can tell him I won't yip a yip until I hear from Marjune."

"Very well. Oh, *Titan Silver*? Good news. Here is your bride with the civil authority and the witnesses, about to come in."

"Fine," Mercury Bill said. "Hey, Marjune, are you there?"

"Here," Marjune said, "here, my darling!"

The Hunk sneered audibly.

"We had better start," Mercury Bill said. "In less than half an hour all transmission will be out."

Mercury Bill got a piece of lint in his eye as the ceremony ended; that was the sole mishap. When the part came about "...if any man can show reason why this man and this woman, etc." they heard the Hunk grumbling, but it said nothing.

He wished that he could kiss the bride. He would have suffered a dozen hellfires for that privilege. Instead, here he was, with a few more

minutes to live, in the embrace of a big black hunk of rock twice as large as the ship. As large as the ship. The ship! That was it!

Now he knew what it was that was so incongruous about this. A faint hope. The barest chance. He had perhaps fifteen minutes, but that might be enough.

"Marjune?" he yelled, "Marjune, are you there?"

The voice of the operator, impersonal and very faint, said, "Your wife has fainted, Mr. Williamson."

"Then tell her—tell her—say, can you still read me, Earth? Earth? Come in, Earth?"

"We read you faintly, but not for much longer, I fear."

"Okay, get this. I am sitting here, spending my last moments this side of perdition quietly. (He was, in fact, struggling inadly with his space suit.) I am eating a bowl of—ugh, that zipper!—a bowl of Mammoth chicken soup. Good hot soup is just what I need now as I—damn that buckle—wait quietly for the end. Mammoth soup. Yessir. Good old Mammoth soup. Nourishing, delicious, makes you live forever, confound this helmet! Well, my signal must be fading. Tell Marjune that there is a little wedding-present for her. A matter of twenty-five thousand bucks. She can contact that Abraham Martin fellow for details.

"Goodbye now, if I don't see any of you again."

HE DIDN'T spend much time in the airlock. He couldn't worry about a little thing like the bends now.

He adjusted his helmet transmitter and spoke. "Hunk, are you still with me?"

"I am here," the Hunk said, "ever faithful; though sorely grieved at your behavior."

"Glad you hung around," said Mer-

cury Bill, propelling himself gently into space.

"What did you—I say, a most curious thing has happened! A worm-like thing has just crawled from your side, my love."

"That is me," Mercury Bill said. "I counted on your being a little surprised, but it occurred to me just a minute ago, that maybe you were being pretty badly fooled by my voice. You thought that my ship, the *Silver Titan*, was alive. Sorry to disillusion you, but a rocketship is inert. It is a shell which carries worms—I mean men like me through space. So you fell in love with my ship, thinking it was alive—not me."

"Horrid little worm," the Hunk said in a giant fury. "Certainly not you! How is it you have tricked me? My beautiful, my shiny, cylindrical—speak to me, my darling."

"It can't say a word."

"Then I am lost. I am destined to wander alone. I may as well end it all."

"Not so fast," Mercury Bill said. "I'll make a bargain with you. If I can solve your problem, will you release my ship?"

"Puny worm, what can you do!"

"Never mind. Is it a deal?"

The Hunk agreed.

"Okay," Mercury Bill said. "Just wait until I pull myself around on the other side of you. There!" He grasped an out-jutting finger of the living mass that tingled even through his heavy gloves.

He prepared his equipment and set to work.

"That tickles," the Hunk said finally. "What are you doing?"

"Drilling a hole in your side with a heat hammer," Mercury Bill said. "Don't bother me. It's hot as the hinges out here, and I haven't got much time. Not enough to answer silly questions."

"That's all very well for you to

say," the Hunk said, "but I—*ouch!* Now what are you up to?"

"You're hard, dammit. I'm chiseling the hole out bigger."

"And now?"

"Another hole. Keep quiet, will you."

"I feel sick," the Hunk said presently. "I wish you would end this foolish procedure."

"That's because I've dropped a dozen sticks of good, old-fashioned dynamite inside you. There!" Mercury Bill grunted. "The fuse is lighted. Now I've got to get out of here, quick!"

He gave himself a sharp kick into space.

"What have you done?" the Hunk wailed. "I don't—"

The explosion came. Mercury Bill didn't hear it, but the Hunk's electro-telepathic howl of anguish came clearly into his phones.

The Hunk had burst into two pieces—right down the middle!

THE HUNK wallowed there; rather, the *two* Hunks, while he turned on his belt jet and propelled himself back toward the ship.

"What has happened to me?" one of the Hunks said. "I am here, and yet I am *there* too!"

"Yes," chimed in the other Hunk. "What have you done to us?"

Mercury Bill chuckled. "I wasn't chief blaster for Consolidated Mining in the Belt three years for nothing. Out there I used to make singular things plural every day, and I haven't forgotten how. Your problem is solved, boys—or girls, as the case may be. There are two of you now, and you're alike as two peas in a pod, temperamentally, psychologically, and physically—namely shapeless and black. You ought to get along just swell with one another."

"That is true," one of the Hunks said, nuzzling the other. "We shall

never be lonely again. We are grateful for the priceless gift of companionship, now that you put it that way."

"Then you might release the *Silver Titan*," Mercury Bill said. "I've got barely enough time to nose up and pull out of the sun's drag before it's too late."

"Of course," the Hunks said, and the *Silver Titan* floated free!

"Thanks," Mercury Bill said, with a rising lump in his throat. "Thanks,

Hunks." He propelled himself toward his ship.

"Goodbye," the Hunk said, "farewell."

But Mercury Bill did not answer. He was thinking of the words, *whom God has joined together, let no man put asunder. Hell, he thought, there's a little bit of God in every one of us. Marjune, honey, here I come!*



The Way I Saw It...



Universal-International offers the first 3-Dimensional science-fiction movie in "It Came From Outer Space", story by Ray Bradbury. The 3-D aspect of this production is very fine indeed, as are the photography and special effects in general.

The basic story is a good one, much better than might have been expected: beings from outer space crash-land in the Arizona desert, near a small town. They are monsters in appearance, but not in behaviour; their only motive is to repair their ship and leave, but they take as much pains as they can not to harm human beings in the process. People, of course, are terrified, fearing the worst; the "hero" alone believes that the aliens mean no harm, and wants to assist them—and protect them from his panic-stricken fellows.

That such a conflict of opinion would result under the circumstances seems plausible; that a majority of people would fear the aliens seems likely. However all credibility in the humans' behaviour is just about nullified, due to the fact that everyone in the picture, from the "scientists" down to the yokelish local yokel talks on the same level of sheer imbecility.

The pace of the picture is poor. After a minute or two of verbal drivel from hero and heroine, the "meteor" appears in the sky; it crashes; the two get a friend with a helicopter to fly them out, and they investigate. Shots of the interior of the ship, and the aliens, plus the descent to the

wreck, etc., are very effective. An avalanche which buries the ship is also handled with convincing realism, as huge boulders appear to bounce out of the screen.

But, the next scene, taking place the following morning begins the long series of clichés—interspersed with imaginatively-handled appearances of the aliens—that make the picture seem an endless soap-opera with science-fictional trimmings. Also, the soundtrack destroys some of what the cameramen have done so well: every time you hear a weird shrilling you know that the aliens have been here, are here, or are about to appear before your eyes. There's only one surprise in the whole picture, and it won't be a surprise to many fans.

Credits say that the story is by Ray Bradbury, while the screenplay is by Harry Essex; I mention this, because it leaves me uncertain as to who is responsible for the sickening dialogue; it sounded like pure Bradbury to me, but I could be blaming the wrong person.

The finale is strongly handled and almost fulfills the hopes raised by the opening scenes. All in all, the highpoints of "It Came From Outer Space" are too good to be missed by any science-fictionist, but I wouldn't wish the rest on anyone. If I see it again—as I suspect I shall—I think I'll take along a pair of earmuffs; visually, the picture is firstclass from beginning to end. —RWL



ARCHITECT OF CHAOS

by John Danelaw

(illustration by C. A. Murphy)

'Suddenly, there were too many mistakes, too much misunderstanding ...

WILLIAM LOOMIS was feeling all right about everything, with his feet cocked on his desk, when the voice of "J. P." sounded from the intercom. It seemed surprised and unhappy. "Bill! Can you get in here right away?"

"Sure," replied Bill, coming out of a rosy haze with something of a wrench but with a faint feeling of gratification. The Boss sounded as though he needed help; this would do Bill no harm.

"Bill," said J. P., "What the hell is this?"

Bill read the letter from Hawkins Distributors.

Dear Mr. Pondo:

In accordance with our conference of the 19th with your Messrs. Loomis and Splenna, we are prepared to write a contract at your early convenience for 680 of your Model AX-1 at \$1350.00, and 440 of your Model KN-2 at

This May Have Happened

Every now and then, we receive a story which we know that some readers will contend is not science-fiction. Such readers assert that the events in the story could happen right here and now, and may have happened already.

This was the case with Raymond F. Jones' "Doomsday's Color-Press" and — believe it or not — with Katherine MacLean's "Where Or When?".

So far as the evidence that has come my way goes, neither story was based on actual events; both lay in the realm of the possible or probable. And I think that "Architect of Chaos" falls into the same category.

Some will contend that the present story is downright impossible; all I can say to that is a fervent, "I hope so!"

The Editor

\$1980.00, delivered F.O.B. Los Angeles.

Bill did not catch it at first. "Hey!" he said, after reading it again. "They've got the prices turned around!"

J. P. pierced him with a wild look. "Somebody got them turned around. That's eighty thousand cold loss to us if we sign it. Earl says that's what you quoted them."

Bill turned on "Earl," who was E. Splenna, Assistant to the President of International Industrial Machines, Inc. Splenna, a slender, smooth man with a narrow dark mustache, sat looking self-possessed.

"Dammit," said Bill, "if you thought that was what I said, why didn't you correct me?"

"I'm sorry," replied Splenna. "Prices

on that line are not much up my alley. It *did* sound a little odd, but I didn't know what you might have been doing lately on costs—you've done some remarkable things that way, you know."

"Listen, J. P.," he said, "why not call up Bistrom (The Hawkins manager) and see what *he* says?"

J. P. did that. By the time the call came through he had managed to put on an unconcerned air in a transparent sort of way. After a few personally casual remarks, he said, "Just wanted to check back on these figures in your letter of the 19th. Six-eighty AX-1 at thirteen-fifty, four-forty KN-2 at nineteen eighty. Correct?"

The squeak in the transmitter sounded faintly surprised.

"That is correct. I hardly see how there could be a misunderstanding; we

went into some detail and Mr. Splenna and our secretary took full notes on the discussion."

"Uh, ah, well—just so—nothing like being sure, you know." J. P. limped off the phone and glared.

"I don't get it," said Bill. "I just don't get it." He was half-stunned. The details of the conference were rotating solidly through his head and there was no spare room for that reversal of figures. "Anyway, the contract isn't signed." He reached feebly for a straw and knew that he was pushing it away from him when he did it.

"Oh, yeah?" said J. P. "How long would I be in business if I didn't sign it now? ...Get the hell out, both of you! I've got to think—and fast!"

Bill got back to his office on numb feet and stared blankly around. Everything had seemed very homelike here a few minutes ago. This was his first jolt. He had graduated two years before, directly into the technical managing end of I. M. M., and had come up rapidly, riding a natural knack for the business. He had been basking in admiration and approval for months, and the nerve-ends of his pride were now suddenly stripped. This was something he had never found on a slide-rule.

Steadying down his cerebral whirl with an effort, he began to review that conference word by word—and he knew that his memory was good. He recalled distinctly that he had had vividly in mind the production-differences between those two machines, in detail; also that the prices had been mentioned—not once, but several times. Not only that, but at one point he had explained, as far as possible without giving too much information, just why the prices differed so much. The picture was perfectly clear, but something about it bothered him. Most of us have had the maddening experience of some tantalizing memory whose

shape is *almost* seen again and again, but repeatedly slips away without coming clear. Something like that kept fuzzily intruding into the back of Bill's mind, and as fuzzily fading; he called it the "dead whale"—a slippery thing that kept sliding off the harpoon back into the depths.

THIS WAS Friday; he had the whole weekend in which to bat out his brains; and nearly did it. On Monday, feeling gone over with a rasp, he sat at his desk waiting for J. P. to call, his innards quivering gently. In due time, he obeyed the dreaded summons, to meet with a surprise. Splenna was with J. P., and the latter seemed quite calm.

"Bill," he said, "I think Earl has gotten us off the hook on that Hawkins deal. We can at least break even; tell him, Earl."

"I spent the weekend going over the drawings of the machines," Splenna explained, "and I think we can even up by some changes of materials and minor design-alterations. For instance, use the Simms metal alloy for the main drum of AX-1 and..."

He went on and on, but Bill heard little more. He was too busy cursing himself for his lost week-end. It appalled him that he had spent the whole time in a mental squirrel-cage of worry and wonder, while a glorified secretary beat him at his own game.

At the end of the interview, J. P.'s patronizingly-forgiving tone told him as plainly as words that his part in the concern henceforth would be distinctly marked out—much narrower, and noticeably shorter than it had previously appeared.

So it proved. He was thereafter quietly left out of policy and sales discussions, and also discovered that all his figures and designs were being double-checked. So far as others were concerned, it was no longer "Mr. Loomis" but "poor Bill." Only an un-



conquerable stubbornness kept him from quitting. There was some "Oh, well, anybody can make a slip" consolation that did nothing to help.

None of them knew what Bill knew—the intimate accuracy with which his brain had been meshed into that balance between costs and mechanical details. The thing was frightening. It formed such a puzzle that he was finally forced to a choice between conclusions; first, that the Hawkins manager, a substantial part of his force, and Earl Splenna, had conspired to put something over; or, second, that Bill Loomis' brain had actually slipped a cog—and might slip some more. The first alternative was for the birds. Bill knew the business world too well to fall for Soviet-type romanticism about it. Pondering over the second choice—well, he had never dreamed of consulting a skullsmith in his wildest moments; but he finally came to it.

He just looked up the nearest psychiatrist in the phone-book and made

an appointment. However, he was lucky. The individual selected, though not a reincarnation of Freud or Jung, was trained and reasonably competent.

After hearing the story, which Bill got out with a red face, he said: "Then this is an isolated instance—not part of a series of difficulties of a similar nature?"

"Definitely no! Nothing remotely like it ever happened to me before!"

"Have you been under some unusual mental strain or worry?"

"Definitely no again. Up to 2:30 P.M. on that Friday, I was as happy as a lark and as peaceful as a clam."

"No affairs of the heart not going well?"

Bill blushed. "Uh—ah—let us say one was maybe coming up—but nothing about it to be unhappy about. On the contrary. Or—it *was* that way," he added despondently.

"Well, Mr. Loomis, there are many reasons why such mental lapses might occur, either as the result of a present situation or some long-forgotten experience. However, they seldom appear with such suddenness. This may not be easy. I suppose you know that if it went to a complete psychoanalysis it would be a matter of two or three years and quite expensive?"

"Uh—how about a sort of preliminary survey, so to say? Kind of tap around the skull with a light hammer for a few times and see what sounds you get? Might be a lead of some kind? Frankly, I've got to have a solution in a lot less time than that!"

"I know what you mean," said the psychiatrist. "It would do no harm. I could give you—let's see—some time Wednesday at three to start. Would that be satisfactory?"

"Yes... Listen, have you any ideas as to what it *might* be?"

"It is not always advisable to set forth a theory in advance, as it might put ideas into the patient's mind and interfere with a clear analysis. How-

ever, I might suggest one possibility. As I gather it, you have been, up to last week, very successful in your job, and had nothing to complain of during your university career either?"

"Frankly, Doctor, I don't know anybody with less to complain about—up to then."

"Have you ever been conscious of an uneasy feeling that it all might be too good to be true—too good to last?"

Bill frowned over this for a while. "No—o," he said. "I can't recall ever having had that kind of feeling at all. It has always just seemed natural to be on top of the world."

THE PSYCHIATRIST'S eyebrows rose a trifle. "It is rather unusual," he said, "to encounter a man so well adjusted as that." Bill had a thought that "well adjusted" wasn't exactly what he had in mind.

"What I mean," he went on, "is this: a number of people have what might be called uneasy consciences, all the way from acute convictions of sin down to a feeling of not having lived up to capacity or opportunity. In other words, they have 'guilt complexes,' and often the causes of them are too deeply imbedded in the subconscious to be brought to light by themselves. You have, no doubt, noted that one most easily remembers what he wants to remember, and conversely.

"We submerge unpleasant thoughts beyond reach, but they leave a trace-scar, and the 'guilt complex' is often one of them. It exists as an uneasy feeling that punishment of some sort is overhanging—which in turn easily translates itself into a feeling that things are too good to be true, or too good to last. Since the instinct of self-preservation leads us to look for means to secure ourselves, we often, quite unconsciously try bribery as a way out."

"Bribery?" Bill asked. "Of whom?"

"Fate, perhaps, or the 'gods,' or whatnot. All through history, people

have tried to secure their prosperity by making sacrifices, trying to keep the gods from being jealous; a way, so to say, of buying a greater good by sacrificing a smaller. As for instance, the yearly ceremony of the Doges of Venice in which a valuable ring was cast into the sea to secure a continuance of maritime prosperity.

"Other instances will occur to you. It now appears that people frequently punish themselves—as in the case of the so-called 'accident-prone'—in a subconscious desire to evade some dreaded but undefined retribution of a more painful nature. Sometimes it is done by getting into physical accidents; sometimes by doing something foolish that brings about punishment; sometimes by building up unnecessary worries and pictures of disaster."

"And you think," said Bill incredulously, "that I may have made an ass of myself to punish myself because of some such feeling of guilt?"

"That is merely a *possible* explanation; it is too early to express a positive opinion."

Bill did not take this idea in very easily. The notion that some mysterious part of his own mind was playing such tricks on the rest of it represented to him a slice of everything unwholesome, superstitious, and repugnant. He almost felt that he would rather settle for a plain verdict of "nuts"—unclassified. However, he paid two more visits to this psychiatrist before things turned off in another direction.

After the last visit the doctor told him: "Up to date I haven't been able to unearth a definite cause, but I do seem to find some kind of 'block'—some memory dug in so deeply that every time a 'lead' seems to be promising, it gets diverted to another tack—just as though something in your subconscious were aware of your treatment and trying to frustrate it. There is always, naturally, evasive action of

some kind—but usually derived from the simple desire to avoid pain caused by turning up an unpleasant memory. Here it doesn't seem quite that. It appears more purposive and, let us say, cunning. But you have something in there, all right. Something pretty definite, and also unusually well-guarded—but apparently not a guilt complex."

"Does it seem to have been going on long?" asked Bill.

"No—that's the odd part of it. It seems to be of quite recent origin, and doesn't check with anything else I have been able to extract of your history."

"Hah!" Bill suddenly remembered the "dead whale" and described it. "Could that be it?" he asked.

The psychiatrist frowned. "It might very well be. If it is that close to the surface, some incident might show its true nature at any time."

"Well, if you can dig it up, you might promote quite a bit of business around our place. I'm not the only one who has been hit."

"Yes?"

"Last week one of our junior executives dictated a letter—a perfectly good letter, right up the alley and to the point. But he addressed it to the wrong firm, and there was hell to pay."

"The typist didn't make a mistake in the addressee?"

"No. It was dictated to a machine. The firm-name was right on the cylinder with the rest. Some other things like it have happened. The Boss is wondering now whether he's running a business or a budding madhouse."

IT WAS ONLY a few days later that Bill saw the "dead whale" lying right out in daylight on a desk, during the lunch hour; and the whole picture flashed into his mind to stay. His first reaction was a blind, boiling rage that spun the room in a red haze; for a few moments the only line of action he could think of was the direct, satisfy-

ing one of tearing a certain party limb from limb and strewing the pieces out on the sidewalk.

"The—!" he whispered.

He had never imagined himself capable of such fury. The cold, calculatingly vengeful state of mind that followed, equally surprised him. He was growing up under forced draft, and not in too healthy a direction at the moment. The problem of proving his case, as he saw when the emotional storm died, seemed almost impossible. For the moment, he saw only one obvious step, and took it—out to a bookstore. He was quick enough to slip back into the noon-empty office and do a quick manipulation without being caught. As the force straggled back from lunch, he sat at his own desk lost in quick schemes...

Another weekend was coming up; he let himself into the offices on Saturday morning with a heavy suitcase and spent a good part of the time there until Monday. It was hot vacation weather, and he was fortunate enough not to have anyone else drop in. Late Sunday evening he checked over the scene and was well-satisfied; there were no visible traces of what he had done. He was quite sure that the thing was going to go to lengths, and he was now loaded for it—in whichever direction it struck.

"However," he said to himself, "I'll have to catch J. P. himself before I can get the thing over. Smaller fry won't do. But he's sure to get into the net sooner or later."

It was later rather than sooner. However, the wait was not unfruitful. By the time the big fish came in, several smaller ones were stashed in Bill's secret deep freeze, to be fried on The Day. He ran the hook through his own thumb in catching one of them—Mary Thompson.

Up to this time, there had been nothing overt between Mary and himself—just a growingly warm intimacy and

mutual understanding forwarded by a few dates. But these things creep up on one, and what happened hurt more than he would have thought. It occurred one day when the two were alone in his office—not entirely by accident. Out of a blue sky, when he was expecting something quite different, Mary expressed herself at some length in terms that sickened Bill down to his toes, and departed with a thoroughly disgusted look thrown over her shoulder.

He sat down and sweated for a while, between resentful anger and pity. "Poor kid! Another score to come out in the wash; it won't be easy for her when she finds out."

Nor was it easy for him either during the following days when she either refused to meet his eyes at all, or met them with a mixture of shock, shame, and contempt on her own face.

This misery was ended shortly after the big fellow got into Bill's creel.

George Morgan, a little younger than "J. P.", was general manager of the firm, and had been for some years. The two top executives were good friends, got along harmoniously, and in general the concern was a good one to work for, in spite of a somewhat hard-headed and explosive tendency on Pondo's part.

SOME WEEKS after Bill's secret office activities, Pondo and Morgan had a run-in, some echoes of which leaked out in loud snatches to most of the rest of the office force. Morgan left the President's office with a slam, went to his own and began packing up, white with rage. So far as the others were concerned the skies had fallen.

For several days, Pondo grouched miserably in his office, making no move to replace Morgan, and the office descended steadily into chaos. The firm was too small to escape being badly shaken, coming on top of

considerable other disintegration during past weeks.

After a while, Bill decided that things had ripened enough, and called on Morgan. He was shocked at the manner in which the latter now showed his age. It dawned on him that "the higher the fewer," and that a displaced senior executive of middle age had far fewer places to go than a canned workman. In talking to Morgan, however, it was apparent that the hurt went deeper than mere displacement. There was shock, sorrow, and disillusionment in it also. He was reluctant to discuss the explosion in any detail; he studied Bill curiously, and finally asked a hesitant question.

"No," said Bill, "I can say definitely he's *not* slipping mentally."

"But—but—I can't think of anything else to account for what he said to me."

"You can't think of *anything*?"

"I've gone over the damn mess a thousand times, and even in my dreams—or nightmares. I can't get a ray of light—unless it's that."

"Well, Mr. Morgan, one of my reasons for talking to you was to find out whether you had any clue. I know the answer from A to Z plus, myself, but I've got something to prove. The fact that you can't even think of an answer just shows me how tough it will be to get the truth over. However, I think I can tell you now not to worry. You'll be back, and not long from now."

"I can't believe it—I don't dare believe it! What in the devil *have* you dug up?"

"I can't talk now, even to you, Mr. Morgan. I will say that it's something new in crime, but nothing more right now."

"Well if you won't say, you won't say. I'm not going to build any hopes—I don't dare. But if you can get me off this hook—well, what can I say?"

Bill left him on the doorstep, a hag-

gard and wistful hope in his eyes that died away as he turned back into the house. Bill called Pondo on the intercom early next morning.

"Huh—what—oh, yes, Bill?" J. P.'s voice sounded as though he were only half there—and that half pretty miserable.

"If you aren't busy, I have something important to talk about," said Bill.

"Oh, yes—of course. Come on in." It was apparent that J. P. didn't really care much whether Bill came on in or went to hell. He was getting to be more and more that way.

"J. P." said Bill. "I'm going to ask for something that you'll probably think is damn queer, but I'm going to lay in on the line. I know what's been going wrong around here, and I am ready to prove it; but I have to do it in my own way, with a free hand. Either I get to do it that way or I'm through here."

Pondo's dulled eyes glimmered. "That's sort of strong talk from a lad of your age who pulled the boner that you did."

"What I am proposing to prove is just what that boner really meant. Do you figure by now that nobody's gone haywire around here but me?"

"Uh—no, I sure as hell can't say that. . . Morgan, of all people. . . what the devil are you talking about, anyway?"

"I am not talking except under my own conditions."

"I'll be. . . well, what *are* your conditions?"

"I want you to call the office-force together for a meeting and let me run it exactly as I please."

"I don't think I ever heard a nervier proposition, considering everything."

"I will have a signed resignation on your desk when we start. When I am through, pick it up or tear it up."

"That's no bonus; I can fire you any time, anyway."

"I am offering you a chance to get this concern straightened out. I mean exactly what I say. Take it up or leave it. The place is going to crack up unless the thing is settled; and I am all through, as of today, if you can't see fit to give me the chance."

"I suppose," rejoined J. P., "you have heard of rats and a sinking ship."

"Yeah. But in this case the rats themselves are gnawing holes in it. I'm offering you a trap."

J. P. caved suddenly. "All right," he said wearily. "I can't see how you can make things any worse anyway. Go to it—and have that resignation on my desk when you start!"

THE GATHERED group showed a mixture of excitement, apprehension, and a general "what's up" atmosphere.

J. P. explained: "At this point I see no use in kidding ourselves about the fact that this concern has been badly messed up during the past few weeks by a series of mistakes and quarrels that nobody seems to have been able to settle or run down. Half of you have had occasion to call the other half liars, for one reason or another, and in one way or another; it has reached the point where I can't trust anybody with letters or negotiations outside. Now Loomis here, who made the first bust—and I must say, the second worst single bust up to date—claims that there is some kind of solution that can straighten everything out. He also says that he can't pull it effectively except by a meeting like this. He won't tell me anything more, but he has bet his job on it. I'll go along with him that far. All yours, Loomis!"

Bill went back to his office to bring in a tape-recorder and a number of rolls. He set up the amplifier in the middle of a table, placed the group—nine in all—around it, and started the first roll. Fred Keller, in charge of the shipping department, started as

he heard his own voice, followed by that of Elbert Jones, his assistant, in turn. After a dozen words, Keller interrupted: "Hey, I never said that—what the hell kind of game is this?"

Bill stopped the tape and asked "how did your voice get on the tape if you never said it?"

"Damned if I know! It's a fake of some kind—I don't know anything about these gadgets!"

"On the contrary, Keller," said Jones, "that's exactly what you *did* say!"

"There's no way to fake that kind of thing, Keller," said one of Bill's fellow-technologists. "I know; it would have to be done by piecing parts and separate words out of a number of recordings. You couldn't possibly make a smooth job of it. Besides, it would have to be a put-up job between Bill and Jones. What for?"

While Keller was feeling blindly for an answer, Bill said: "I have several of these tangles on the tapes. I want to ask all of you to hold your horses while I run them. I propose to tie up the whole mess when I get through. Right now I wish to say that I am not trying to show anybody up—except one certain guy—and the answer to all of this is something I don't think anyone except himself has the slightest suspicion of."

"I am still riding along," interjected J. P., whose curiosity was now predominant among several mixed emotions. "I want you all to shut up and listen; but first I want to know how you got these recordings!"

"I slipped in here one weekend and wired the whole office into an amplifier feeding the recorder in my desk. It was no small job—sound insulation and all, and besides, getting the wires all out of sight."

"Why, you—" began J. P., then calmed himself and stared at Bill ominously. "Wasn't that going pretty far?" he ended.

"I was ready to go just as far as

there was," said Bill. "After everything comes out in the wash, you can then all decide whether the conditions justified what I did. I wish to say," he added hastily, upon observing signs of panic among several of the younger members, "that nothing of a personal nature is on these tapes. I cut out and destroyed everything not directly concerning this particular company business—and I have a very bad memory for anything else."

The panic subsided somewhat, but several unusually rosy complexions remained.

THE RECORDING went on; several times Keller restrained himself with an effort. When Bill stopped the record, Jones himself broke out: "I'm no better satisfied with that recording than Keller. It started out all right, but there were parts that were no more what I said than they were what Keller says *he* said!"

"Let me ask you one thing," replied Bill. "Assuming that the record *is* correct, it leaves no very good reason for the row in the first place. Isn't that so?"

"Uh—yes... That's sure as hell so. But you will have to prove what this all is before I'll buy it!"

"Me too," said Jones.

Three more battles were run off the record with very similar results. In two cases Bill called on the files to show substantial documented evidence that the record—and not the memories of the participants—held water on the facts. The crowd, including J. P., was patently impressed, and increasingly baffled.

Bill picked up the fifth roll, and hesitated. "J. P.," he said, "This is one that I would rather you and I listened to alone."

"O. K.," said J. P. "I guess you are the boss."

The room was cleared. Ten minutes later J. P. was clutching his desk, sick and shaken, looking at Bill wildly. His recorded remarks were

astray of facts, atrocious in tone, viciously unjust in attitude.

"My God, Bill, I *couldn't* have said that! Not to George Morgan!"

"Here it is. You said it, all right. The others had to take it. How about you?"

"Yes—it's as fair one way as the other. But what *is* this? Do you want to drive me finally and completely nuts?"

"That's all the recordings I'm using—except one private matter that doesn't concern the company. I am ready now to put the cards down."

WHEN THE group reassembled, Bill said, "In one way or another, I think you all know the nature of the supposed bull that I made on the Hawkins deal, and the sort of doghouse I've been in since—though said doghouse is a little crowded lately. As you can see now, what hit me was the same thing in principle that operated in these other cases.

"All the misunderstandings were about different things, but they all had one feature in common. They were caused by people being perfectly sure they heard others say something that said others were perfectly sure they *hadn't* said. Now, how would it happen that so many people were liars—and why? I spent many hours going over and over these episodes, and not in a single one of them is any sign of any personal advantage to be derived by the parties to these bobbles. In every case, as a matter of fact, they were injured in the eyes of their co-workers and often in their standing with the company. I knew, in my own case, that the net result nearly wrecked my job and gave me days of a worse time than I had ever imagined it possible to have. Something entirely unaccountable had happened to me, and it was no chore to realize that the others were equally unaware of what had happened.

"Naturally, because of the mental aspect involved, I first suspected some

new kind of epidemic virus disease, or something of that kind, that upset the brain-processes. But I get around—and there wasn't a sign of anything of this kind in this region except as affecting the I. M. M. I thought of everything—including dope in the water cooler and whatnot. All the time I nearly went mad fishing for a certain elusive memory that would explain the whole thing—never could quite get it out where I could see it—until one day I saw something on a desk that brought the whole situation out like a lightning flash.

"There are two additional connecting links between these incidents besides similarity in principle. First, when analyzed, every single one of them tended to the personal advantage of one particular individual, and I am ready to show how, and whom, in each case. In one case, the result would be to put somebody who stood in the way of personal ambition, under a cloud. In another, damage was done to someone who had had a run-in with that same individual. In another, the bulls, or apparent bulls, of some members of the force gave chances for somebody else to shine in comparison. It is not hard to remedy a mess *if you know in advance when and how it is going to happen*, and have plenty of time to plan for it. Second—when I dropped on to how it was done, I found that in every case the opportunity existed, as well as the motive and the method."

He paused to let things sink in. Bill was really enjoying himself, for the first time in a long while.

"The key, finally," he said, "was this." He lifted a book and turned it slowly while they read the title: *The History and Rationale of Hypnotism*. "I found this on the desk of that particular individual who fitted the other specifications. He left it there under a letter—forgot it when he went to lunch."

There was a chaotic mixture of ex-

clamations of indignation and incredulity. "Oh, come now, Bill..." "Hey, don't tell me anybody can hypnotize me..." "You're nuts..."

"Quiet!" demanded Bill. "I know this isn't easy to get over, but wait until I am through! ...Now, I wish to explain the phenomenon known as post-hypnotic suggestion. And, incidentally, to remind you that I can bring a hundred established references from authorities to prove everything I say. There's nothing really new about the system by a matter of over a hundred years.

"Now basically, the key to hypnosis is to get the mind of the victim into a completely passive, unresisting state, and put it to sleep in that condition. That removes a normal barrier between the subconscious mind and the outside world. The operator can then talk to it directly and feed it orders—and *it has no will of its own*. At the same time, it is well established that impulses from the subconscious actually usually dominate our conscious thinking when they happen to be present. Therefore—an order can be given to the subconscious, in the hypnotic state, which is to be carried out later by the individual; and at the same time a covering order can be given to have the conscious mind forget the very existence of the original order. Hence, at a given time—or when a certain trigger-event occurs—the victim, in spite of himself, and sometimes without having any rational idea of why he does it, carries out that order.

"If a firm notion of some kind, similarly triggered, is implanted in his mind, that notion, or delusion, will block out the real situation completely. To him the false notion is the reality. They call this post-hypnotic suggestion and it can go as far as making a man say something and think he said something else."

BILL PAUSED, and looked around, before continuing. "It just hap-

pens that mostly only a small circle of people—often considered a bit on the balmy side—has had real interest in this sort of thing. We are all too busy with other matters, and we all shy off from anything that seems weird, queer, or 'occult.'

"Now the method of hypnosis is to dull the mind with some kind of monotonous visual repetition, like a jeweled cigar-lighter twirled on a chain." There was a gasp from somewhere. "Or a monotonous repetition of a certain sound, soothing kind preferred." Another intake of breath and a start. "Or some kind of conversation suggestive of sleep, repose, rest, and the like."

There was more restless movement in the room, and quick glances from one to another. Bill had the whip-hand now.

"When I picked up this book, I had no trouble remembering that the day before my mishap with Hawkins, the gent who was riding with me seemed to have dwelt at great length on the sleepy monotony of the long drive down the Valley to Los Angeles. I also remembered that, when we got on that long tangent out of Bakersfield, I had a terrific battle to keep my eyes open—and was mentally cursing him for yakking on about what a sleepy drive it was.

"It happens also that I read in an engineering journal that a main cause of the bad accident records of turnpikes and super-highways is supposed to be the hypnotic effect of steady vibration and speeding scenery, without the breaks and stimuli given by crossroads and turns on ordinary highways. I clearly remember pulling out off the highway into a side road and taking a nap—at the suggestion of my traveling-companion; and the last thing I remembered about that nap was cursing him some more because he kept talking and wouldn't let me sleep. And—finally I was able to remember just a little of what he was

actually saying as I dropped off. A little—but plenty.

"I don't think I have to go any farther, as far as the rest of the victims are concerned. I see you have now done some remembering and drawn your own conclusions. Among other things, J. P., your after-lunch naps—and who on one or more occasions may have been murmuring to you as you dropped off. At this point, need I say that the desk off which I picked that book was that of Earl Splenna?"

"A damn fine case of woven moonshine, you son!" broke in Splenna. "For one thing, whose word but yours has anybody got that it was my book at all?"

"Merely the fact that it has nice slick covers that are plastered with your fingerprints," said Bill. "I wrapped it up carefully when I went out to buy another copy to put in place of it."

Splenna was breathing hoarsely.

"You unprintable this and that," J. P. yelled at him. "I'll send you over the road for this if it's the last thing I do!"

Splenna rallied and sneered. "On what charge? Witchcraft? I don't think you'll find it in the California code!"

"Conspiracy, then, by God!"

"And *that* takes not less than two people. Moreover, what do you think would happen to I. M. M. if it got around that the force got shot to pieces by black magic? No—you are not going to do a damn thing except give me an excellent reference!"

"Lord!" breathed J. P., appalled.

"I wouldn't worry, J. P.," said Bill grinning in a definitely sinister way at Splenna. "It's all taken care of."

"Huh—what?" asked the culprit.

"What you never thought of," said Bill smoothly and with dark amusement, "was that *you* were just as susceptible as anybody else. And that I had quite a while to study the technique—after I found out what you

were up to. Now for instance, Splenna, at the present moment you could be carrying around a nice post-hypnotic command of your own, neatly troweled in beyond your recollection of any instance where it could have occurred.

"So far as you know, it could be almost anything. There is quite a variety of possibilities, and any one of them could be triggered by a date or hour, a meeting with a certain person, or a given set of circumstances. It might happen in the next fifteen minutes or it might happen ten years from now. You might, as an example, upchuck on the boss' desk when you apply for your next job. There could be a little case of indecent exposure at high noon on Market Street. You might, by an unaccountable impulse, slash your throat at 7 P. M. on the tenth of a given month. Or jump the wrong way where a truck was coming at you. Or come to an important interview with no pants on. Or make a particularly clumsy forgery of a check. Or spit in a policeman's face. Maybe it isn't one suggestion only. Maybe it's twenty or a hundred—one to come after another as fast as you dig out from under—if you do. Well, people, he knows the possibilities!"

Splenna sprang at Bill. "You—you—!" he raved. "What did you do to me?"

"I'll tell you nothing," he said. "But I'll give you a little hint. Hereafter, don't stray off the straight and narrow path; don't stray one single inch in any direction whatever—or you'll never know what may happen. And most particularly, just dismiss from your mind any faint thought of any more experiments in hypnotism!"

Splenna stared for a moment, his lips flecked with foam, and rushed out of the door.

J. P. spoke after a long, shocked silence. "Bill, I don't think I ever saw anything as horrible as that done to anybody."

"He did it to himself, J. P. Nothing I said could have bothered him except for the fact that he knew—clear down to his shoes, and by having done it himself—just what *could* be done to a man that way. He stabbed at his fellow-men with a psychic knife—I just turned the wrist and let his own muscle cut his throat... Well, as far as the company is concerned, that's that. There is another little matter, however, that needs taking care of in my own office."

HE GAZED at Mary Thompson, who nodded docilely but miserably and apprehensively.

"Mary," he said, when they were alone. "You know now that our bust-up was not just what you thought at the time."

She nodded, her downcast face twisting. "It's up to you," he continued. "You have to make a choice and I can't spare you, although I would give an arm to wipe out the whole thing. You will either have to listen to the record of what actually happened—and it won't be pleasant—or spend the rest of your life wondering. Which is it to be?"

She looked up, her lips quivering pitifully. "I have to know, Bill."

"Then I'll turn it on and leave the room while you listen... Meantime—will it help if I tell you that I love you very dearly, no matter what?"

"Even after—after whatever I did?"

"Yes—please remember that—darling."

He returned to the room to find her crying convulsively with her head buried on the desk. He lifted her gently as she tried to draw away.

"Don't touch me, Bill," she sobbed. "I'm not fit—those *awful* things—the things I thought *you* said—!"

"Nothing *you* said, Mary. The creation of a completely unscrupulous mind, with you the unconscious recorder." He pulled the wilted girl into his arms; after a time she quieted down.

"Bill?"

"Yes?"

"Did you *really* hypnotize him?"

"If I tell you, will you promise not to tell a living soul else?"

"Yes. I promise."

"Well, the fact is that I found that I couldn't use that filthy weapon even against such a cockroach. Seemed as though it would make me too much like him. I never actually *said* I did, you know."

"No—really, you didn't. But you might as well."

"Only because of himself. He had made himself rotten ripe for the suggestion simply through his own success. He drew his own suicidal conclusions; they ruined him—not I."

"But he will wind up in a madhouse. Don't you think that after he was learned his lesson you could tell him the truth?"

"It would be no use at all. Judging others by himself, he would be surer than ever. He would think I was lying to him, in order to make the crash more horrible when it came. Don't think I'm entirely ruthless, Mary. I have thought of all that. He had to be stopped—Lord knows what more he might have done—and that was the only way. It had to be pushed over with maximum force or not at all. Nothing on earth can undo it now."

"Bill."

"Yes?"

"You are top dog here now. Even J. P. has his neck under your foot. Almost everybody has humiliated you in one way or another, and your revenge is complete. Won't you, well—go sort of easy on us?"

"You are worrying about Cocky Bill Loomis, aren't you?"

"Y-yes."

"He doesn't live around here any more. Scared Bill Loomis has taken his place. When I think of the possibilities..."





Readin' and Writhin'

Book Reviews by L. Sprague de Camp

IN THE last year, publishers have issued many non-fiction books of interest to science-fiction enthusiasts—book dealing with scientific controversies, speculations, mysteries, and prophecies. I reviewed eight such books in the last issue, and several more have appeared since.

Before I review these, however, I might note some adverse reviews of C. G. Darwin's "The Next Million Years" (which I praised) in other science-fiction magazines. Some were vehement all out of proportion to the faults attributed to the book. The main objection raised to Dr. Darwin's prediction of the lowering of living-standards as a result of overcrowding and exhaustion of resources is that he took no account of space-travel.

This is a silly objection. In the first place, we do not yet have space-travel, so all predictions about its effects are matters of surmise. From present indications, it looks as though space-travel *may* be possible, if some government cares to put a few billion dollars into it.

If it does happen, the chances are that, while we can probably reach the moon, and perhaps Mars and Venus, the cost in effort and materials will be enormous in proportion to the number of people who could be placed on these bodies, and the quantity of materials that could be brought back. Conditions on these bodies are such that human life could be maintained only by great effort and elaborate protective equipment, which eliminates them as a practical outlet for emigration. The same objections apply *a fortiori* to the other planets. As for other stars it is probable (though not certain) that they are forever beyond our reach because of their distance. Therefore,

while the scientific interest of space-travel is immense, to look upon it as a practical means of relieving overpopulation and lack of materials is like trying to cure these difficulties in modern Italy by sending the whole U. S. Navy on a series of round trips from Italy to Antarctica, each round trip to carry six Italians on the outward journey and 1,000 pounds of Antarctic coal on the return.

The animus displayed by Dr. Darwin's critics can be attributed to two causes. One is a dislike of some of my colleagues to admit that there is anything that science cannot do. Well, maybe science can make our frenetic species of hairless primates all as wise, virtuous, altruistic, and far-sighted as the best of us, but that I will believe when I see it. The other is the ostrich-attitude assumed by people with religious objections to birth-control, whenever this subject comes up. They hate to admit that one of their tenets would condemn most of mankind to endless misery, and hence they bristle at the mere word "overpopulation" and resort to sleights and sophistries to dodge the question.

The first book to consider covers some of the same ground as Darwin's "The Impact of Science on Society" by Bertrand Russell (NY: Simon & Schuster, 1953, 114 pp., \$2.00, paper-bound \$1.00). This is one of a long series of books, of high quality, on the philosophy of science by this author. It deals largely with the effects of the scientific and industrial revolutions in the past few centuries, and makes predictions and recommendations for the future of scientific society. As usual Dr. Russell is erudite, urbane, and witty:

Charles II perceived that science could be an ally against the "fanatics," as those who regretted Cromwell were called. He founded the Royal Society, and made science fashionable. Enlightenment spread gradually downwards from the Court. The House of Commons was as yet by no means so modern in outlook as the King. After the plague and the Great Fire, a House of Commons Committee inquired into the causes of these misfortunes, which were generally attributed to divine displeasure, though it was not clear to what the displeasure was due. The Committee decided that what most displeased the Lord was the words of Mr. Thomas Hobbes. It was decreed that no work of his should be published in England. This measure proved effective: there has never since been a plague or a Great Fire in London. (P. 4.)

While more optimistic than Darwin, Russell paints a dark picture of an all-too-probable future society in which applied psychology enables tyrants to convince their subjects that the latter are happy and free, no matter how exploited and oppressed they really are. The chance of salvation, he concludes, is slim—but big enough to be worth fighting for.

AMATEUR psycho-historians, Foundation-builders, and cultural witherers will be interested in "The Uses of the Past: Profiles of Former Societies" by Herbert J. Muller (NY: Oxford Univ. Pr., 1952, xiii + 394 pp., \$5.00). This Herbert J. Muller is not the geneticist of that name, who discovered how to induce artificial mutations by X-rays; who worked in Russia and then quarreled with the Soviet Government over its suppression of genetics; and who finally appeared as a speaker at the Tenth World Science Fiction Convention in Chicago, in 1952.

This Muller is a professor of English with a bent for interpretative history. He runs over many aspects of Greek, Hebrew, Roman, Medieval-European, Byzantine, Asiatic, and modern cultures, noting their rises and falls, and the irony that their most grandiose efforts to save and improve themselves have quite generally resulted in their greatest failures and disasters. Though he respects Spengler and Toynbee, he points out many flaws in their constructs—such as Toynbee's tacit assumption that his own pious Anglicanism is the True Faith that all the rest of the world—including the Indians and Chinese—should accept to be saved.

Muller concludes that there is no single great Meaning to history, but a lot of useful minor meanings; no Supreme Good, but a lot of local, finite, ephemeral goods worth striving for. As with Russell the work is informed with a delightful humor:

No drama in history is more fascinating than the rise of Yahweh. Starting out as an obscure deity of a despised people, apparently incapable of protecting them from their enemies, he nevertheless triumphed over his far more powerful rivals and eventually conquered a mighty civilization. Offhand, it is the very model of the success story—the story of a local god who made good, against terrific odds. And it is a story of character, not luck. (P. 80.)

THE PUBLISHER of Martin Gardner's admirable "In the Name of Science" has presented us with a quite different work, whose author was a prolific contributor to *Amazing Stories* during the Gernsback and Sloane era. Now, with his wife, he has written "America's Ancient Civilizations", by A. Hyatt Verrill and Ruth Verrill (NY: Putnam, 1953, xvii + 334 pp., \$5.00). The first third of the book tells about the Mayas and Aztecs; the rest about the Andean civilization, of which Verrill has made personal archeological investigations.

We have had all sorts of theories of the origin of the American Indians: Welsh Indians, Jewish Indians, Japanese Indians, Polynesian Indians, African Indians, Phoenician Indians, Norse Indians, East Indians, Atlantean Indians, and Lemurian Indians. The scientific view is that the Indians came from Asia via Siberia, though there may have been some limited contacts—between 1000 and 1500 A. D.—between the Indians of western South America and the easternmost Polynesians.

Verrill has a new one: the Sumerian Indians. He thinks that King Sargon of Akkad, as if he had not had enough to do with conquering most of Iraq, also extended his empire to include Egypt, and finally sailed over to America to civilize the aborigines. This eccentric hypothesis is supported by reference to an unpublished book by Mrs. Verrill, "Gods Who Were Men", in which that lady appears to have revolutionized ancient history by consolidating the kings of ancient Egypt and Sumeria. She assumes, for instance, that the Egyptian Narmer and the Sumerian Naram-Sin were the same, on no better basis than a resemblance of name. Needless to say, this is contrary to the opinion of everybody else who has studied the history of these countries, whose inhabitants, instead of being under one rule, probably never even heard of one another.

The book teems with unscientific terms like "Aryan noses" and with statements which—while plausible to the uninformed—are simply not so. For instance Verrill says on page 9 that the Phoenicians had "large, ocean-going, well-rigged ships" that could cross the Atlantic, and on the next page prints a cut of such a ship. Now for one thing the picture is of an Egyptian, not a Phoenician, ship. For another the term

"ocean-going" is ambiguous. If you mean a ship that can sail in an ocean, any little catboat can do that near shore on a calm day. If you mean one that can cross an ocean, an Egyptian or Phoenician galley is quite impractical for such use. The first overcast would make her lose her way from lack of a compass; the first good blow would swamp her because of her low freeboard; and, even if the weather were ideal, she could not even carry enough food and water for her rowers.

Again, on the plate facing p. 142, a photograph of an Assyrian bas-relief is captioned: "deity picking an ear of corn." But, as any good botanist could have told the author, the Assyrian cherub is doing nothing of the sort; instead, he is fertilizing a row of female date-palms with the spathe of the male date-palm. And pop! goes another argument for the Old-World origin of maize.

Verrill hints at pterosaurs and other Mesozoic reptiles surviving to modern times. He constantly reiterates that "there is no possible question" or "no conceivable doubt" that this or that vagary is true, which does not make it so. Mixed with pseudo-scientific baragouin is much sound fact about the civilized Amerinds, but you must know a good deal about them already to tell which is which. You buy the book at your own risk.

A BOOK displaying similar quirks on a similar subject is "Lost Trails, Lost Cities", by Col. Percy Harrison Fawcett (NY: Funk & Wagnalls, 1953, xvi + 332 pp., \$5.00). I told you something of this intrepid visionary in my article "The Golden Mirage" in this magazine for May, 1953. Now we have the doughty Colonel's own story.

Colonel Fawcett was a tall, bald, gray-eyed man of abstemious habits and Spartan character. The only close-up photograph of him in the book shows him in his exploring clothes in Bolivia in 1911, with a frowning, far-away look, a beard, and sweeping mustache of the kind formerly associated with Balkan bandits. He was a man of extraordinary versatility, successful as a soldier (though he detested the snobbery and formality of military life), an artist, a yacht-designer, and an explorer. Now he turns out (unless a ghost has been at the manuscript) to have been an able writer as well, with a gift of vivid description and narration:

When we rode into town, the Governor sat on one of the doorsteps watching a fiesta. The rest of the population, numbering fifty or sixty, were drunk. Some lay flat on the ground, unconscious; others shuffled in a rude dance to appalling music coming from an absolutely unfurnished hut called the Gran Hotel; an Indian woman was struggling to undress herself;

and the decomposing body of a man, grotesquely holding a bottle in his hand, lay in the gutter. (P. 44.)

The book consists of an unfinished manuscript that Fawcett left when he departed on his last expedition in Brazil, in 1925, with an epilogue written recently by his surviving son Brian Fawcett, now a mechanical engineer for a Peruvian railway. It deals with Fawcett's eight explorations and surveying-journeys from 1906 to 1925 and contains a wealth of amusing anecdotes and exciting incidents. It brings out the fiendish atrocities, massacres, and enslavements visited on the South American Indians by whites from the first settlement of that continent up to the time the book was written, though the Indian's lot has been somewhat ameliorated (at least in Brazil) since then, and though North Americans are not in a position to assert much moral superiority in this matter.

As an example of Latin American humor:

A half-caste told me that near the Chocolatal Rapid he and some other men captured a canoe with two Indians in it only a short time previously. (for enslavement).

"One of them refused all food and died," he said. "The other started a hunger strike, too, but we strung him up to a tree by the heels and had a little rifle practice on him. He died at the eighth shot. It was great fun!" (P. 94.)

Along with his ability, ruggedness, courage, energy, and adaptability, Fawcett was also a credulous mystic who dabbled in Spiritualism and psychometry; he believed rumors of Indians called "Bats", who lived in holes in the ground, emerging only at night, and of hairy cannibals dwelling in trees. He claimed to have killed an anaconda 62 feet long, of which he measured 45 feet and estimated the rest. Snakes sixty to eighty feet long, he solemnly assures us, were common where he explored. Now, one would expect a trained surveyor to measure a dead snake accurately. The longest anacondas ever brought out of the jungle, alive or dead, measure about 25 feet, and herpetologists agree that the snake probably never exceeds thirty. Ditmars, of the Bronx Zoo, once offered \$1,000 for a forty-foot anaconda and never had occasion to pay. I shan't believe in Fawcett's Hyborian monsters until somebody produces one.

When he set out on his last journey, Fawcett was looking for a rumored ruined city, which he calls "Z," somewhere in the state of Goyaz. His theory was that this city was a relic of a great pre-Inca Toltec empire that extended from Mexico far down into South America, but that perished in a convulsion connected or identical with the dunking of Plato's Atlantis. (There are, by the way, a number of ruined cities

in Paraguay, about 800 miles south of the area Fawcett was searching, but their origin is not mysterious. They were built in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by the Indians, under the direction of the Jesuits, and fell to pieces when the Spanish government expelled the Jesuits.)

Fawcett disappeared, with his older son and another young Briton. Several expeditions failed to find him, though they aroused a swarm of contradictory rumors about the fate of the party. A couple of years ago Orlando Vilas Boas persuaded the Calapalo Indians to say that they had killed the three Britons because Fawcett had struck an Indian, and to dig up what purported to be Fawcett's skeleton. Brian Fawcett says that, in the first place, the skeleton has been examined in England by specialists and is not that of Fawcett; and in the second it would have been completely out of character for the Colonel to have hit an Indian, as he was always kind and gentle with them. Whatever Fawcett's real fate, however, there seems to be little doubt that he is dead by now.

If you do not take seriously the author's pseudo-scientific assertions about ruined cities, ancient civilizations, the Japanese-speaking Otomis of Mexico, and the habits of South American wild life, you will find the book an absorbing narrative.

"EXPLORATIONS in Science" by Waldemar Kaempffert (NY: Viking, 1953, vii + 296 pp., \$3.50) is a popular run-down of current scientific developments by the scientific editor of the *New York Times*. The chapters—on the atomic bomb, the earth-satellite vehicle, mechanical hearts, rain-making, atomic power, the Hale telescope, supersonic aircraft, codes and ciphers, and other subjects—are re-writes of articles by this author that have appeared in magazines, and in his column in the *Times*. Readers with a scientific background will find that they know most of what Dr. Kaempffert says already, though they may be surprised by his account of some interesting late developments—such as the use of underwater television for salvaging sunken ships. Young or non-scientific readers will find it a useful means of brushing up on current developments. A chapter on H. G. Wells will interest science-fictional aficionados.

Dr. Kaempffert is not quite right in attributing to Darwin (the 19th-century Darwin, that is) the belief that man is descended from an anthropoid ape like those now living. Darwin made it plain that man's ancestors branched off from their simian relatives quite a way back, though the precise time and place of this branching has been a matter of controversy and surmise ever since. Darwin's own description: "hairy, tailed quadruped, probably arboreal... an inhabitant of the Old World... classed among the *Quadrumana*" includes nearly all the catarrhine monkeys, living and

fossil, our ancestor among them. The only scientist to take seriously the idea of the descent of man from an ape like one now living was Klaatsch, who in the 1920's advanced the eccentric theory of the polyphylogeny of man: that the white, black and yellow races came from the chimpanzee, gorilla, and orang-utan respectively.

On the other hand it is unscientific to talk, as do some apologetic popularizers of evolution, in reverent tones of the "common ancestor" of men, apes, and modern monkeys as if it were some nobler, handsomer beast than the primates we know. It looked like a monkey, acted like a monkey, and no doubt scratched like a monkey. So why not call it a monkey?

THE MOST important development in clearing up the story of the prehistory of man and the rise of civilization in the last few decades is neither the Peking man, nor the Dead Sea Scrolls, nor the Hittite archives, nor any other such archeological or anthropological find. It is the development of the radiocarbon method of dating specimens, which for the first time gives archeol-anthropologists a *direct* method of measuring the age of such objects. Hitherto, scientists have sought to date these objects, and the events connected with them, by a variety of indirect methods—which vary widely in reliability, and give a wide range of results. Thus various methods of correlating the Mayan calendar with ours gives dates for Stela 9 at Uaxactun ranging from 203 B. C. and 534 A. D. among scientists; and among pseudo-scientists the range is even wider, with antiquities of tens of thousands of years attributed to this and other Mayan monuments. Only rarely has it been possible, by counting tree-rings or the varves from the bottom of a fossil lake, to make direct measurements of prehistoric time, and then only over short stretches.

Now, by carefully collecting and purifying a sample of carbon of prehistoric origin (say a sea-shell or a piece of charcoal from a cave-man's camp-fire) and by measuring, with a special Geiger counter, the amount of radioactivity in it resulting from the presence of carbon-14, a direct measurement can be made, back to ages of 15,000 to 20,000 years ago, with an accuracy of about plus or minus 5.5%. This method is described in detail in "Radiocarbon Dating" by Willard F. Libby (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Pr., 1952, vii + 124 pp., \$3.50).

This is quite a bit of money for a small and rather technical book, but for those with a lively interest in this development it is the most authoritative work to date. Dr. Libby explains the scientific principles of radiocarbon dating; the precautions necessary in preparing a sample for measurement (very elaborate); the apparatus; the measuring process; and he gives a long list of dates already established for archeological samples from various lands. Some ele-

mentary knowledge of physics is desirable before reading. Frederick Johnson sums up the results to date on archeology and geology.

Among these results may be mentioned: the chronology of the Andean (Inca and pre-Inca) civilizations turns out to be about that which most archeologists had agreed on already from other sources. This should put the quietus on the wilder speculations of men like Fawcett and Verrill, attributing vastly greater ages to these cultures. (It should, that is, but it won't.) The age of the primitive Folsom culture of North America is established at about 10,000 years, or 8,000 B. C. Apparently man reached North America earlier than many had supposed, but it also took him longer than would have thought to develop any sort of higher culture once he got there.

In the Old World, the age of the first agricultural settlements in Iraq (Hassuna, Qalat Jarmo, etc.) is brought down from 8,000 to a mere 6,700 years ago. The generally-accepted short chronology for Egyptian history (in contrast to the long chronology of Flinders Petrie and his followers) is confirmed. Stonehenge was begun in late Neolithic times, about 1850 B.C. But most significantly, the age of the last advance of the Pleistocene ice has been drastically reduced. Whereas it was formerly estimated to have begun its retreat from 16,000 to 25,000 years ago, this glaciation is found to have taken place a mere 11,000 years back.

A similar but smaller publication, edited by Frederick Johnson under the same title, "Radiocarbon Dating," is available from the Society for American Archaeology for \$1.50.

AS AN OLD debunker, I can tell you that one of our species' odder characteristics is that they will pay much more to be bunked than to be debunked. One would think this an anti-survival characteristic, but there it is. The flying-saucer craze of the last lustrum is an example. There have been three books on the subject (not counting the recent Palmer-Arnold publication): Heard's "Is Another World Watching?", Keyhoe's "The Flying Saucers Are Real," and Scully's "Behind the Flying Saucers". None of these books attacked the saucers with much scientific acuteness, and all displayed an uncritical enthusiasm for rumors and prodigies. All sold well enough to be reprinted in paper-bound form, and the Scully book, by far the worst of the three, became a genuine best-seller.

Now, however, we have a thorough scientific treatment of the subject by Dr. Donald H. Menzel, an astrophysicist of Harvard University: "Flying Saucers" (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Pr., 1953 xii + 319 pp., \$4.75). Dr. Menzel wrote a couple of articles on the subject for *Look* which struck sparks from credophiles. This book

includes that material and much more.

The author discusses the many kinds of atmospheric and celestial phenomena that can give rise to saucerian reports; haloes, sun-dogs, and other ice-crustal effects; aurora, comets, and meteors; mirages, clouds, shadows, and reflections. He traces these phenomena back through history: in the Middle Ages they were usually called "flying dragons" and in ancient times they may have furnished the basis for Ezekiel's vision of the wheel in the sky. Menzel tells the story of the flying-saucer hoaxes: the Chrisman-Dahl hoax that resulted in the fatal crash of an American bomber, and the Newton-GeBauer hoax that engendered Frank Scully's farcical book.

The conclusion is that while "saucers" are sometimes hoaxes, they are not what people have thought them to be. Specifically they are neither little men in space-ships from Venus, Russian reconnaissance aircraft, or secret American experimental aircraft. (The Navy did have such an airplane a decade ago, the XF5U or "flying bedbug," but it didn't work very well and never went into production.) They can be any of a lot of different things, including even a piece of newspaper carried into the sky by a thermal updraft, and where their cause is unknown the reason is not that they are inherently mysterious but that the data are too fragmentary or too garbled by an untrained observer to decide among the possibilities.

If you really want to know what is what in Sauceria, Dr. Menzel is your man.

Finally, serious astronauts will wish to get a copy of the Saenger-Bredt report, that is to say: "A Rocket Drive for Long Range Bombers," by E. Saenger and J. Bredt. (Dr. Robert Cornog, 990 Cheltenham Road, Santa Barbara, Calif.; 1952, 175 pp., paper-bound, \$3.95 translated by M. Hamermesh, Radio Research Laboratory). This is a basic work of modern reaction-propulsion aeronautics originally composed in 1944 in Airming, Germany, by Dr. Eugen Saenger, one of the greatest living rocket theoreticians, and Dr. Irene Bredt (Mrs. Saenger). Since 1945 the Saengers have been working in Paris for the French Government. This translation was originally produced by the U. S. Navy, and further publication has been undertaken personally by Dr. Cornog (from whom copies should be ordered directly) to spread the technical ideas set forth. The bizarre story of the bungling attempt by Vassilii Stalin (the son of the late Yosef S.) and a pair of Russian Colonels to snatch the Saengers out of central Europe just after V-E Day is told on pp. 370ff of Willy Ley's "Rockets, Missiles, and Space Travel". Willy also gives a popular summary of the seminal ideas set forth in the Report. Lots of graphs, tables, and equations for those whose math hasn't rusted away.

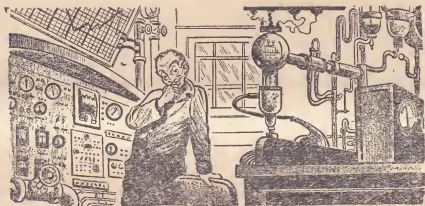


CURTAIN IN THE SKY

by Charles Dye

(illustrated by Milton Luros)

Sometimes it may be safe enough to learn the truth —
if you can be reasonably sure of forgetting it all the
next morning . . .



DR. LAWRENCE PRESCOTT stopped. It was dark, and all about him was the quiet chirping of crickets in the shrubbery.

Where was he going?

The steady shining of the stars and the outline of a square silhouetted bulk to his left impressed him with the unnatural clarity that comes with a blank mind.

"Lil' too mush to drink," he mumbled. "Pull myself t'gether." Making a mental effort he recognized the square dark bulk to his left as the Northland Mental Hospital where he worked. He was on the walk which led to the administrative and laboratory wing. Good old laboratory! Had the party ended then?

A memory of voices echoed in his ears. Laboratory assistants and his neurology students arguing. . . "What is consciousness—is all life conscious? Is an earthworm conscious?" Brilliant discussion! He recalled vaguely that

he had had a brilliant idea himself, a very brilliant idea. He'd had some difficulty in expressing it, however. . . his voice loud and earnest, repeating, "Wha' is life, eh? Wha' is life?"

That was it! They had laughed at him—at *him*. They should not be permitted to laugh. . . He was going to the laboratory to show them. Brilliant idea! He would show them all!

He strode forward determinedly.

He stood swaying in the middle of the laboratory, his brow wrinkled in laborious thought. What had he come to do?

There was the encephelograph, taking up a good part of one wall, with its bank of dials and oscilloscopes and the other rube-goldbergs which he had added to graph the brain-waves of various sections of various types of patients.

There was the work-table, littered with odds and ends of wires and tubes where his assistant researched. There

was his old desk and a window half-open, with a faint breeze bringing in the distant sound of crickets and stirring a letter lying on the desk.

There was something he had to remember—What was it—his idea? Brilliant idea! He tried to recapture the sound of voices and the discussion which had led up to his inspiration.

“—Is an earthworm conscious?” No, that couldn’t be it... Bright lights, music, a student’s grinning face—“How do you know you are an entity, doctor? What proof have you that you are conscious? Are you an individual or a society? For example, where would you be if your cells suddenly decided to stop cooperating and crawled away separately to fend for themselves? They could, you know. What if your cells—”

“Shhh—not so loud. Don’t give them any subversive ideas!” That’s what he had said. Lawrence Prescott laughed and sat down at his desk. Brilliant! But not the right thing, of course. He had not come to his laboratory to experiment on *that*.

The breeze fluttered an open letter under the paper weight on his desk. He picked it up and reread it, smiling. From Fishberg. Good old Fishberg—heart of gold.

He reread the final paragraphs twice:

Glad to hear you have found the interference that was bollixing up your brain-wave graphings. Random variations which look like brain-waves is enough to make a good researcher pull his hair, if he has any left to pull. You were damned cagy about what the source was, some Earth-field function, I’d bet. You can’t pull the obscure professional “you-wouldn’t-understand” act on old Fishberg. He’s run into trouble like that himself; and it sounds like the same thing. I’ll bet you can solve my puzzle for me, too.

There is an unknown factor which sends the hour-to-hour average ion-readings of the human blood up and down, within the limits of the body’s homostat compensation mechanisms. Probably hits all life the same. Irritates diagnosticians who are trying to

find out what a specific patient’s PH is.

There is an unknown factor which sends the hourly stock market averages randomly up and down. It irritates brokers who want to know which way a specific stock is going. *The graph of blood PH is an inverse duplicate of the graph of stock prices.*

There is a perfect correlation. The two factors must be from the same source. What the source is and how far it directs supposedly rational business behavior in the longer run is a question which irritates and confounds economists who want to diagnose the controllable elements of the nation’s economy, including *me*.

If you could locate and isolate that interference and graph it hour to hour, year to year, the diagnosticians and brokers and *us* economists could correct for the daily interference and get some results that would *really* work!

LAWRENCE PRESCOTT put the letter down, raised himself to his feet with some care, and went around the laboratory switching everything on as he went.

Good old George Fishberg! Heart of gold! Anything for a friend. He would isolate the interference for him in a jiffy. Stock market goes up and down to general euphoria and depression, doesn’t it? Easy!

Everything was humming now. He looked around smiling. There were five different pieces of equipment for measuring solar radiation and Earth field variables, but the most recent one—his pride and joy—had magnetically oriented parts and coils, a special sort of grounding, and a scanner which looked much like an old model radar-reception basin. It was fastened on a a jointed arm outside the window and focused on a northern segment of sky.

He had located the encephelograph interference-source in a section of the ionosphere of Earth. The receptor picked up electrical fluctuations in that area, simply reversing them and feeding them back into the encephelograph at the graphing level to cancel its own pattern in the machine.

“Euphoria and depression,” mumbled Prescott, fitting the electrodes

casually over his balding skull. He knew the typical brain-patterns of epileptic depression, mal, and euphoria and the other pathological mood changers. Probably some interference-source superimposed similar waves on the brain. Easy to spot. Just amplify and run through interference sources, find one that produced epileptic-type patterns. Easy.

He began to work, fumbling slightly, but iron habit kept him precise. The electrodes sat askew on his head like a strange party hat. He felt something wrong and knocked at them casually with the back of his hand, and they moved almost into line—

He had no warning of danger, no feeling that his logic was not all it should have been.

The two hypersensitive electrodes on his skull, set to focus for depth, now happened to be focusing in the speech centers on a concept correlation point. The encephelograph hummed and its oscilloscope registered a steady wave, but its graphing stylus wrote out a sharp jagged line that varied form second to second according to Prescott's thought. The line registered basic general ideas and was independent of words. It would have been roughly the same for any highly logical being.

"Easy," he muttered, moving the scanner slightly to cover a point of sky where he remembered having seen an interestingly irregular fluctuation where he had scanned before. There was a slight glow in that section, a trace of aurora borealis, bringing the ionosphere faintly into visibility like a transparent shimmering curtain across the sky.

Lawrence Prescott reached out and twisted the volume control of the pick-up from negative to positive in full amplification, and turned to see how the amplified interference would register on the oscilloscope.

Inside the sensitive works of the

encephelograph there was a slight mechanical confusion. The new current coming in flowed backward, down from the graphing stage, down through the various amplifying stages, diminishing proportionally as it went.

Current patterns flowed out of the tips of the electrodes into the neurologist's brain. He had time to glance from the oscilloscope to the graph, and begin to notice something interesting there just before it hit him.

Delirium!

A dancing swirl of sunlight and dark, heat and cold, forces of unguessable violence, strange radiations and incandescences, swirls of recurring motion fending off blows of radiation by subtle shifts and ripples of compensation, understanding that spread and permeated and became ever clearer, blows of radiation absorbed, balanced against, dissipated and distributed with growing skill, shifts of balance, ripples of thought, understanding, control, swirls of sunlight and dark and—

Power!

AFTER THREE seconds a tube in the encephelograph burned out, which was probably just as well for the sanity of Dr. Lawrence Prescott. His mind was not built to absorb so much so fast, and much of it was alien. His logic-hungry mind would have stayed wide open and conscious, desperately grasping for more, trying to absorb the ungraspable width and violence of the insights.

He found himself lying on the floor, the electrodes knocked askew again, but still firmly clamped to his skull. He took them off carefully.

It was pain to awaken. He tried to hold onto the edges of the dream, but it slipped away leaving only shadows of exultancy and power. The warm air of the summer night rustled the letter on the desk, and the quiet hum of the electrical equipment seemed part of his blood.

[Turn To Page 82]

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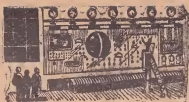
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THE MELTING POT

A Discussion of the Science-Fiction Fan Press

by Calvin Thomas Beck

As this column is being put to bed, it's just four to five weeks since the August SFQ has been out. Therefore, the number of letters sent my way, in accordance with the reaction I was expecting about readers' opinions on methods of fanmagazine duplication, have been so scanty, so far. However, I am led to feel that a general consensus of opinion would indicate: "Given a neat format and readable material, regardless of what duplicating (printing) system is used, we'll be adequately satisfied."

Fanmags are hardly monopolized by the science-fantasy battered shores of this country alone. Heading the list this time are several importations from 'way "Down Under" and England. After reading them over, I'd like to stress it that these overseas fan-editors, not being within easy access to the gold-paved avenues of America as others are, can well do with your support and subscriptions. Contrasted with the domestic brand, spewed from all sorts of fan-presses, these boys seem to be holding their own more than well.

PERHAPS—Available by subscription from Chas. Anderson, 311 E. Polk St., Phoenix, Ariz. 25c, 3/60c. Bimonthly.

One of the few overseas fanmags, to my recall, available domestically. Those responsible for putting it together are: editor L. J. Harding, ably assisted by Dick Jenssen, Roger Dard ("Australia's #1 Fan"), and Mervyn Binne, all "Down Under" lads, from the continent of boomerangs, reigning marsupials, and swagmen. Not forgetting the platypus, of course.

This was *Perhaps*' first issue, and I hope this neat little job continues for as long as possible. The lineup of contributors, and quality of their work, shows more than above-average keenness on the editor's part. And opening up is a two page editorial, exhibiting much enthusiasm on Harding's

side for what he hopes will be a crack magazine, and how he'll be scrounging around for top material from the four corners of the stf fantasy world—including a few editorial sidelights about his contributors, friends, and a little personal history.

William Veney's article, on Australia's pro' writers and fans, I found illuminating. I guess what caught my fancy most, however, was "Down With The Customs!"—an editorial note describing how various U. S. stfantasy books and mags have been confiscated (this has been occurring for several years, incidentally). Customs agents, or detectives, recently ransacked Dard's home and made off with some of his collection, proclaiming the magazines "illicit", and more words to that effect.

Rounding out the rest of the issue is Dard's own article on a history of Aussie fandom, and some of his activities in promulgating it. Next is Anderson's column, in the way of news for Aussie fans, reporting on various events "Stateside-wise". A story of unusual dual-personality, "Schizo", by Martin James. And Bob Silverberg's well done treatise regarding "American and Worldwide Fandom." All this, together with contributions by Ken Slater, Jenssen, H. J. Campbell, poetry, book reviews, and more compartments, or departments, make *Perhaps* a tidy little item.

FORERUNNER—R. D. Nicholson, 24 Warren Rd., Double Bay, Sydney, Australia. Published several times a year. 30c a copy.

Fanzine reviewing isn't exactly the easiest job in pro-mags, as I'm beginning to learn. The trouble begins when one begins receiving a lot of valiant and honest efforts, like Nicholson's *Forerunner*, or like the preceeding Aussie mag, or others reviewed in previous columns... and those I have still to receive. You know for one thing, sooner or later you'll be either running out of the proper adjectives, or else repeating yourself

all over again. But suffice it to say that this little job shows a great deal more ambition behind it than can be found in many a moon.

Forerunner itself is quite close to being professional in appearance and what's-good-to-read, apparently specializing only in fiction and using some articles. Specifically, only one article in this issue: Norma Williams' "Cro Magnon Man", telling a lot of what is now theorized, on how the world was, eons before recorded history. Vol Molesworth, an oldtimer whom many fans recognize, shows up with the conclusion of his two-part novel, "Arkaroo". Also other fiction by F. B. Bryning, Royce Williams, and Doug Nicholson. This 'zine can use your subscriptions...and I mean can use. An airmail letter reaches any part of the world within days only.

ANDROMEDA—Pete Campbell, 60 Cal-garth Rd., Windermere West, England. 25c, 4/\$1.00. Bimonthly.

There's also a note by Roger Dard in this 'zine, stating how the abnormal stringency by the Aussie Customs makes it impossible for him to continue in fandom. Perhaps the following excerpt from Dard's letter describes some of this problem best:

"When you live in Australia, and collect books or mags, you get used to being persecuted by the authorities. Last week I was 'raided' by the State Police. They denounced Operation Fantast as being responsible for flooding Australia with 'pornographic magazines'. It could not happen in England or America, but it does happen here!"

Operation Fantast, by the way, is an international organization which has been ably supplying many fans, for the last four or five years, with loads of U. S. sfantasy books and mags—or the few British publications that lately have found a way of being produced—after a relaxation of various "emergency controls" and rationing. They're doing a lot in aiding a number of fans all over the world, in "restricted" or dry locust areas, by providing them with sfantasy reading-matter, which otherwise would be unobtainable. No doubt all of us hope something will soon be done to eliminate conditions like the one presently existing in Australia.

The editor is also running a "Score-board", for determining what types of material and features readers like best. He says, "If you want to know how we'll run it, turn to the back page of the first issue of *Dynamic Science Fiction*—if it wasn't for Lowndes' explanation, we wouldn't know how to run it at all!"

Campbell's resolution is to make each succeeding issue of his mag "bigger and better", and in more than fifty pages a plethora of fiction, articles, and other events are included—not overlooking the fact that

the editor was responsible for writing much of the mag's first issue himself—and doing it nicely, I'm happy to say.

KAYMAR-TRADER—K. Martin, Carlson, 1028 Third Ave. South, Moorehead, Minnesota. 10c, 8/\$1.00. Monthly.

Where can you find copies of Haggard's works, like "Allan Quatermain", and others, for 20c to 30c, 1941, or older, issues of *Astounding*, F. A. and other famous old pro-mags for only 25c or 30c each? The *Trader* is your best answer. There's much shopping in store for the SF buyer and collector in every month's issue, and probably no other publication gives so many the chance of filling up the gaps in their shelves for such unheard-of low prices. In one ad, where the seller had a quantity of four to twenty year old mags for sale (at the "eye-gouging" prices of 20c to 25c, of course), was a descriptive passage which bears repeating:

"The original owner of most of these items was a young fan who couldn't read; he just looked at the pictures. But he had clean hands, and there's considerable mileage still remaining."

If you have something to sell, an announcement to make, or anything you'd like to advertise, only a thin dollar buys you a full-page ad, in one of the oldest amateur mags today, reaching over a hundred and fifty subscribers. The year's subscription, for \$1.00, is alone a sound investment.

VEGA—Joel Nydahl, 119 S. Front St., Marquette, Mich. 10c, 3/25. Monthly.

Guest autobiographies run in every issue, giving a run-down of the lives and times of various fan notables in fandom, and how the fan-bug bit 'em. Harlan "The Birdbath" Ellison has his own column called, naturally, "Birdbath". As is his wont he delves interestingly into anything and everything. And I learn from Harl that "Calvin zeemix too bee tring too doo ay good job..." Tank yoo, Harl, even tho' yoo had too put it in fonneticks.

An article by Norman Browne, the fanning of ballots and questionnaires, goes into detail about "The Questionnaire: Its Place in a Fanzine." A wave ballot-sheets lately has swept over the fanzine field to some nearly-disquieting extent. May I register a plea for taming this fad down?

A question and answer dept., "What Every Young Fan Should Know" ("Know" what?), by Marion Bradley, tries to solve different kinds of such typical fan problems as, "How does one go about acquiring a fanzine collection?" to "How do you suggest an up-and-coming young fan become a BNF (Big Name Fan) quickly?"—and Marion's in there trying to solve these uni-

versal worries with her many years of fan experience. This publication is neat in format, going in for a sane share of variety, and is consistently pleasant to while away the time with.

FANTASY-TIMES—James Taurasi, 137-03-32nd Ave., Flushing 54, L.I., N. Y. 10c, 12/\$1.00. Twice Monthly.

It's now been said too many times, and we're only repeating that F-T is the ST-Field's oldest and finest newspaper. The copy at hand has the entire detailed report on the 3rd Fan-Vet's Convention, held annually in New York, with a list of the well known SF personalities who attended—more than 35 alone—making up part of the 250 odd attendees who were present last April 19th. The largest SF con', from the point of attendance, for a non-world-con' to date, estimating how it lasted for one full day. The "Con' Report" included also a reproduction of the write-up it received in New York's *Daily News*.

Other features, always part of F-T, are the latest developments in the professional and fan world, what new pro-mags will soon be published, changed, or suspended, and news from overseas sources. F-T does strictly okay by itself in getting firsthand info' on everything before many know of it outside for months. Often you can only know about it by reading it in this live-wire paper.

STAR LANES—Orma McCormick, 1558 W. Hazelhurst St., Ferndale 20, Mich. 20c, 6/\$1.00. Quarterly.

An all-poetry journal, and probably the best which has been in the field to date, devoting itself exclusively to the art of metered, rhymed and lyrical sfantasy. Even if you want to get your letter in *Lanes'* letter column, it's gotta be in verse...

It's hard to imagine that, when I first saw a two-page, rough, and slightly-sloppy issue of this 'zine, that it would turn gradually into the decorously-slickish 25 page "pro-type" item reviewed herewith. A neat assemblage of art-work, by that connoisseur of the weird and outre, Ralph Rayburn Phillips, is replete from cover to cover, as well as other artists' efforts. On the lighter side of the poetic scale can be found:

*He hid his dough in his vest,
It made his shroud look funny,
Miser Scrooge then went to rest...
The worms chewed up his money.*

Or something from the letter section, like:

*What power rests within the shadowed
art*

*Found blood on page seven and for
teen?*

*The Horned One haunts me, while my
heart*

*Grows Stony with Medusa's eerie
sheen!*

*What more to write? Alas, it seems
I'll now have shadows in my dreams!*

THE JOURNAL OF SCIENCE FICTION
—Chas. Freudenthal and Ed Wood, 1331 W. Newport Ave., Chicago 13, Ill. 50c for the Special Issue.

This, sorry to state, is proclaimed as the last issue of the *Journal* to be published, and as the editor points out, "the cause is malnutrition, both of material and of readers."

I think that, in the four issues of this 'zine issued so far, few fanmags have ever been so adept capturing a "little magazine" quality of atmosphere as the *Journal*. It's sad seeing them fold such a distinguished and mature periodical, because of insufficient capital, and I trust that some of you reading this may be properly equipped to make the editors reconsider.

Of the hundred and more odd fanmags to have crossed my desk since the inception of this column, the last edition of *Journal* marks a form of bonanza in the field of fan-journalism. Featured is a combination detailed and vivid pictorial account of the 10th World Convention, which was held last year in Chicago, with 30 photos of the people who were there; an entire magazine-index of every pro-mag published during 1952, giving mag and story titles, authors, artists, and story-lengths for each 'zine, including a lot of other information included, too. In addition, there are the articles by Ken Slater, John Pomeroy, Lew Grant, Hugo Gernsback, Ed. Wood, Robert Bloch, and others, not overlooking in the least the impact of what is one of the best-developed editorials I've come across in too long a time. I definitely recommend this as one of the most unusual issues to have ever emanated from the SF fan-press.

VANATIONS—Norman G. Browne, 13906-101A Ave., Edmonton, Alberta, Bimonthly.

No subscription-rate is given, this being part of the editor's policy by having the readers determine what they feel the 'zine is worth to them. However, sending in less than 15c just for a sample copy would be too little for this entertaining and slightly-unusual item. To say the least, the artwork detected is peculiarly different, and refreshing.

This, too, is the same fan-lad who's probably not overlooked a single item in the line of various varieties of votes-and-ballots, or collecting same. But I won't criticize anyone if they like this sort of thing. All of



us enjoy, at times, the oddest tasks and hobbies.

This fanmag boasts a mailing list of 500. How Browne's able to do it, what with no established subscription rates, et al., is something of a small cosmic mystery. Articles and letters (no fiction's used) are carefully selected, and the spirit of the whole affair ranges anywhere from sociological tirades and discussions to long tirades upon religion. . . . Browne soon may have to mail out his gazette in asbestos envelopes.

S. F.—John L. Magnus, Jr., 9612 Second Ave., Silver Springs, Maryland. 15c, 8/\$1.00. *Bimonthly.*

One might like *SF* for its humor, or newsy and clever articles. Humor. Well, one example is Phil Paige's:

"Dr. Jekyll and his brother, Mal, were engaged in a lucrative embalming business, which wasn't strictly within the law. When the gendarmes came to their door, Dr. Jekyll could always Hyde, but there was no place formaldehyde." All I can say, Phil, is beware of Uncle Miltie.

If 'tis articles ye'll be likin', there's Bob Silverberg's clear-cut description of the first issues of pro-mags, and some of their history; something new in the way of columns, by Paul Mittelbuscher, "Via The Time Warp"; news about the sfantasy field, views, and more columns of chatter and gossip than you can shake a stick at...you can take your pick.

FANTASTIC WORLDS—Sam Sackett, 1449 Brockton Ave., Los Angeles 25, Calif. 80c, 4/\$1.00. *Quarterly.*

Gene Hunter tees off a weird mound with a story, "Faint Heart", that could just as easily be read in a number of "pro-type" mags; not to mention Andrew Gregg's delicately eerie tale, "Villa Strega". Good article and fiction quality is always *FW*'s average, like Phil Jose Farmer's article, giving

the inside story about his novel, "The Lov-ers", and some tidy knowledge of the author's background and ideas. Bob Olsen, veteran *STFictioneer*, does some reminiscing of the days when the field was still in its diapers, and Ackerman then not much older. There's plenty for everyone in *FW*.

NONSENSE—Terry Carr, 134 Cambridge St., San Francisco 12, Calif. 2 copies 5c, 4/10c, 8/20c. *Bimonthly.*

Here's a load of value, if you like some of the finest jokes and cartoons out of the fan field. If a pro-type gag book of humor was being published, material from *Non-sense* could walk away with honors.

SPACEWARPER—Charles Nuetzel, 16452 Moorpark St., Encino, Calif. 25c, 4/\$1.00. *Quarterly.*

No less a celebrity than A. E. van Vogt is present, with an article on the opposite sex, and their place in *STFiction*. The format of this semi-pro' type is—well, how can one put it?—(I said one runs out of adjectives in fanzine columns!) pretty, nice, decorative, illuminative, illustrative? Okay, we'll settle for those batch of words, giving you an idea how nice-looking Nuetzel's 'zine is (quick, Roget, my Thesaurus!) He also goes—Nuetzel, that is, not Roget—to some pains with colored interior art, and a cover that might have done justice to Frank R. Paul. Book reviews, and other reviews, fare well and keep the reader abreast of the times. Only three issues old, Nuetzel's work should eventually set a good high standard of its own.

THE MARTIAN TRADER—Thomas Carrigan, 179 Sydney St., Dorchester 25, Mass. 10c, 6/50c, 12/\$1.00. *Bimonthly.*

Frankly, no signs of any Martian detected trading around here; but right off the bat I'll point out that swap-and-sell fanmags are few as it is (this one adds 'em all up to a total of 3 till now). Since, as the editor avows, "600 copies" are sent out to fans wherever fans may live, it's possible this should answer the prayers of those who have wanted to buy and subscribe to a mag with so large a mailing list, or advertise in it, yet at so low a price. Ad-rates are slightly higher than *Kaymar-Trader*, but it's worthwhile, considering the larger margin of ad-coverage: \$1.50 a full page, \$1.00 for 3/4ths of a page, etc. Some features and book reviews are present, too. So far, this is just the first issue, and here's wishing it luck. Only one thing—the name is too similar to its older predecessor, *Kaymar*, and I'd change it to avoid confusion if I were you, Tom.

[Turn To Page 82]



Donnelli's eyes were black and expressionless as he talked.

There were the weavers of golden lies, but undeceived themselves. And part of their task was to make tests, to find out how long the myths were needed . . .

THE MYTH-MAKERS

by Bryce Walton

(illustrated by Paul Orban)

MY DIRECTOR had said it might be murder. Murder was a very uncommon occurrence, but it was inconceivable that a Controller—one of the big-shots in the *Socio-Psychological Bureau of Field Control*—should jump thirty stories to his death! I didn't want to think about the implications.

The dead man's office was big, chrome. A desk, filing cabinets, micro-film projectors, screens, micro-film spools, a desk, chairs, the big windows. A picture of his wife which I turned face-down on the desk. Glass walls and plants reflected in mirrors. No suicide notes: no clue left conveniently behind by a homicidal maniac. There had been few suicides, very few murders. I'd only been assigned to one murder in all my years in the Investigations Bureau.

"Check the glass around the windows," I said.

Burkson went at it, quiet, efficient, usually unemotional. He only wanted to enjoy his time off. Right now he wanted to be out there celebrating the arrival of the Starships; so did I. I didn't know who he had waiting for him. I had Sally. She was nice. She believed in love, marriage that survives all vicissitudes for a life-time, growing old together, all that. An old-fashioned sort.

I found in the desk some loose film-spools, charts covered with intricate vectors and graphs and figures, indicating something having to do with

the complex world of the Controllers. Some global social field-control plan that was away over my head. I put all the stuff in my mailing-brief.

Burkson was putting his equipment away. He said, "Only prints on the glass are Turner's. Up high. He was standing up there, griping the glass on either side. His right hand slipped off. The other hand, he evidently had taken from the glass before he jumped. The shoe-marks there are his; the feet inside the shoes were his. The scope shows that no one else was in this office when he jumped. Nor for at least three hours before that."

So it wasn't murder. Turner—a man responsible for the whole social system of control, a suicide. Unintegration on that level was something I didn't want to think about; it made me feel sick and panicky and faced with too much complexity. But I had to think about it; it was my job.

Burkson was the kind who didn't care much. He was looking out the window at the streamers of light. "It's going to be the biggest Starship welcome yet, Tom." I was trying to think. "Fifteen years they've been out this time, Tom, exploring heaven."

"Wonder what they found this time?" I said. "How many thousands of new worlds, and bigger suns and new people?"

"Maybe intelligent life so far ahead of us that—"

"That what?" I said. "That we'll be handed immortality? A Utopia?"

What's the matter with what we've got? People seldom kill one another any more. Atomic wars, any kind of wars, are ended. No famine, sickness. Unlimited progress, scientific advancement. What more do you want, Burk?"

"I don't know," Burkson whispered. "Turner—a man so big as Turner—he should have had all the answers. But he wasn't so happy, was he?"

I didn't say anything; I felt a headache stirring behind my eyes.

Burkson said, "I put my name in for Spaceflight School. Navigation. Ten years back. Never got called."

"So did I. And I never did either."

"Everybody puts in for spaceflight; nobody ever gets called."

"Well," I said, "only a few thousand have ever gone. Maybe not in our time, Burk, but some day—there'll be a lot more going beyond Andromeda, Sirius, Centauras, and the thousands of other planets and suns they've given names, names I can't remember. Funny how you just remember the old names."

"Sometimes, for me, just hearing what a few lucky guys do isn't enough."

"Everyone his own job," I said. "Well, the rest of this is just lab work, so you can go out and celebrate, Burk."

HE PROTESTED, but he wasn't hard to convince that it wasn't a great injustice to me. Then I dialed and Sally's face faded into the audio-viso phone on Turner's desk. She was nice all right, old-fashioned maybe, but exciting too. Her voice, face, eyes, figure, all exciting. She had a good time, but what she wanted was one of those new family-type houses out on the slopes, with kids, and me working on one of those ten hour a week for family men jobs. It was a different kind of life altogether than I'd ever planned having. First I'd put in for Spaceflight. I'd wanted excitement, adventure. Then I'd become an In-

vestigator, but that wasn't so exciting either. The Controllers had gotten Society on a pretty even keel.

"Listen," I said, "I'm on a job."

She looked upset. Things had been strained. Her eyes looked as though she might have been crying. "Listen, darling," she whispered, "you'd better decide between your job and your favorite blonde."

"I have decided," I said. I thought maybe another second about it. The old-fashioned type of woman, I figured, had a narrow mind. A house, a few kids, and that was the end of a very small world. No big imaginative plans or ideas. I figured if I played along, I might find myself in her world and I didn't want to get trapped. "My job."

"What?" she whispered and I could barely hear her.

"I've decided. My job; we can talk about it later. Go have fun."

She was shaking her head slowly and blinking her eyes as the screen faded. It didn't bother me much. I didn't feel much of anything except a kind of relief. There were a lot of other blondes. Women had far outnumbered men since the Wars that had launched the era of Control, and the far-reaching, over-all Plan. I had no neurotic need for Sally, I figured. She wasn't a Mother-image or something even worse. Though the water had been fine, I thought, there was no love there.

I LOOKED out the window once more before leaving Turner's office. That familiar look on Burkson's face. That of an Earthbound man thinking of what's beyond another Sun in some other sky. And knowing too well he'll never see for himself.

I sent the brief and my reports over to the Lab in an instantaneous Control mail-chute, killed time in a Neuro-Show while the stuff was being checked over. Then I went on over to see my Director, Joe Heath.

He always sat. Before him were

papers, charts, diagrams. An ugly, fat little man with sharp eyes, for whom you almost always did what you were told, without asking why, or hardly thinking at all. I had often wondered if even he knew what part he played in the Plan. He was a department within a department within a chain of departments. Well, it was a time of specialization. Everyone had his specialized job. And way up at the top, Controllers fitted the departments together, kept them working together.

"So he wasn't murdered," Heath said. He looked tired. "Suicide. A Controller!"

"I know how bad that is," I said. "Or at least I've got an idea how bad."

"First Johnson cracked up, and he was high in Control!"

I'd forgotten about Johnson, or rather I'd never known much about that episode. Someone else had investigated that. Heath went on. "Now Turner kills himself. If men of their high integrative level crack, then who is safe? The Controllers aren't men. They've become symbols of an idea, of the Plan and all that it means. If they can go psycho, it's as if society itself were starting to lose its mind!"

"It's at least as bad as that," I said.

"Johnson was found reading from an old Pre-Control Era Christian Bible he had gotten out of a museum. Saying the world was doomed to Hell unless people returned to a faith in a supreme power that rules the Universe—A faith that will take us to a Paradise, after death, that we can never find until we're dead."

"You find out what happened to make Johnson do that?" I said.

"No, no! And now Turner!" Heath spread his hands over the charts. "None of this stuff means much. I—listen, Tom—we're up against something really big, something pretty terrifying. Evidence all leads directly to the Bureau of Universal Relations

and Information. And that, of course, includes mostly all the information, publicity and so forth about the Starships and the Star-rovers. Their flights, discoveries, and adventures."

"Johnson was working on something having to do with that Bureau?"

"Yes, and this stuff you picked up indicates that Turner was working on the same thing—when he flipped."

"They both had to escape some terrific pressure," I said. My hands felt cold. "Johnson could regress, go back to some medieval form of mysticism. Turner couldn't do that; his only adjustment was suicide. It isn't so much what's happened, but who it's happened to!"

"I know, I know! And the trail leads right to the Bureau of Universal Relations and Information."

"Well, I'm going over and spend some time there then," I said.

"No," whispered Heath.

"What?"

"No...no, that's the trouble. We're blocked. Same with Johnson. There's the red lines on both reports and that means hands off! We don't do any investigation whatsoever in that bureau." He slowly shook his head. His eyes had a hollow, defeated and very old look. "They were both working on Starship problems when they went psycho, so we can definitely say there's vital connection. But we can't investigate. And that's final!"

"Then if we can't investigate that bureau, it can't be investigated. Chief—no bureau's supposed to be shut off from us. That's one of the Plan's basic laws."

"Except if the Controllers should see it differently. They're the final decision-makers, Tom; we can't ever forget that."

"But they're the ones who are under pressure that needs to be investigated!"

"That's right. The Controllers are facing some crisis, a really big, terrifying crisis. And they're denying us the

right to investigate their own crisis!" Heath put a pill into his mouth and chewed it. "This is the first time we've been put out of bounds."

"The Controllers," I said, "know what it is and evidently it's too big to let out, even to us. Ours is a public trust. The Plan is for the People, not the Controllers. If this is big enough to disintegrate the Controllers, then the whole social plan's in danger. Our job's security. In a way, it's bigger than the Controllers, according to the Law."

"But the Controllers are the Law," said Heath.

"I think I'll look around," I said. "Investigate a little more."

"You can't. We've got to turn in a nice acceptable report and forget it..."

"Not me. This is my job. Security. Investigations."

"You're crazy," Heath said. "That red line is from the Controllers. We can't act against—"

"I got into this bureau," I said, "because I wanted a little excitement. After all this time, I'm not quitting just when something really big is breaking."

Heath stared at me. "And anyway," I said, "who are we working for, Chief? The Controllers who can flip like everybody else—or the People who have to take what they're handed by omnipotent authority?"

Heath shrugged. He looked scared. He had a right to look that way. I knew what could happen to people, dissenters, rebels and the like. They could just disappear. I'd been an investigator long enough to know how people could disappear. And an investigator could be investigated too. And he could disappear suddenly and completely and forever, just like any one else.

"All right," whispered Heath. "Go make a routine check. Maybe they'll accept that. Get some nice logical reasons for Turner's death that can fit

into the records. Some kind of accident. Some reason that won't cause anyone to worry. Turn it all in and take a vacation. Hunting in the Andes. But remember—remember what disobeying a directive red can mean."

SOMEONE was following me. I had known that for the past three hours. Eyes were on me. I'd been in this business long enough to know when and how the hunters worked.

It was right after I'd gone to talk with Mrs. Turner that I noticed it. I didn't actually see anyone, but I felt it. Mrs. Turner was older and greyed and dignified, and not nearly as smart as her husband. But then very few people were that smart. She cried a little as I talked with her.

Psycho-graphs had shown how her husband's death should be presented to Mrs. Turner with the least amount of negative emotional reaction. To the public at large, notice of Turner's death had already been released, explained, probably forgotten—as an accident. This happened also to be the explanation that would cause Mrs. Turner the least unpleasant abreaction. In any case, as far as the people were concerned, murder and suicide just didn't happen any more. There were always ways of concealing such things. After the wars, people were sensitive, very sensitive, and had to be handled right. Hypnosene and other treatment took care of chance witnesses.

All I got out of Mrs. Turner were a couple of old museum-books her husband had been engrossed in, and the fact that he had seemed worried. I took the books and took a gyrocar back toward the city, and it was then I realized I was being haunted. A dark shadow in the sky maybe, anyway I knew I was being tailed.

It was dark by then, except for that big canopy of blazing lights surrounding the City, and the kleig lights patterning the sky. The Starships were on exhibition and the Star-rovers mak-

ing speeches about where they had been, what they had seen.

The Starships came back, first one bunch, then another. An old story, but its stimulative effect made it seem newer every time some Starships came back from wherever they had been—out there. Years of being jerked through successive layers of hyperspace and coexisting universes. People eager for news. Speeches. And later on, analysis of the Star-roving for the public's satisfaction. The Starship captain making a speech and I caught some of it from the gyrocar radio:

"...6,372 suns and over 100,000 planets. Twenty-five new life forms, some of them highly intelligent... Several new races on a par intellectually with ourselves... on a planet of a sun eighty million light years from 10-epicenter-768, a race whose level of intelligence surpasses anything so far discovered..."

I switched off the radio. I'd heard it all before. Not the same story, but somehow it always sounded the same. I only felt bitterness under the awe. Then I got Heath on the special band of my wrist-radio. I didn't have much faith in its touted secrecy and privacy, not now I didn't. Someone was trailing me through the night sky and I told Heath that.

"Drop it," he said. "I like you. We've worked together a long time, Tom. Drop it. Come back here and we'll write up a report like we did on Johnson, and forget it!"

I told him about the two books I'd found in Turner's home. Museum-pieces. Stromberg's "Soul Of The Universe". Ouspensky's "Tertium Organum". All dusty museum-items, mysticism with pseudo-scientific overtones. Twentieth-century stuff, when science and the old religions were conflicting, and so they were combining the two to make a tastier drink.

"Chief," I said, "Johnson went clear back to ancient religion, to an anthropomorphic God. Turner couldn't do

that, because he was a scientist above all, and something in his make-up wouldn't let him forsake it completely. He tried this compromise-stuff in these books, but that didn't work either. Something about death appealed to him, but now we'll never know what was happening in his brain. We can still find out what caused the shock."

"All right," Heath said hoarsely. "We know it's tied up with the Starships. We got a red directive saying lay off, so that proves it. You'll get picked up, Tom. Lay off. Look... we'll turn in some simple report and mark this investigation closed!"

"You do that," I said. "But I'm going to talk to the Starship Captain. Donnelly."

"That's a terrible mistake," Heath said tightly.

"So what?"

"If you do that, it'll be against my orders."

"You do what you feel like doing," I said. "But I'm seeing Donnelly."

"It's maybe your last mistake, Tom."

"Who who, me? What do I lose? This is a dull life anyway."

"There's a lot can be worse than a dull life."

"Maybe. But you do whatever you like."

"Not what I like, Tom. What I have to do."

"All right then, what you have to do. But remember—you're supposed to serve the people's interest. Johnson and Turner—they probably won't be the last. A few more big-shots like that cracking up and something bigger than any group of people somewhere's going to pop open!"

"I'm an old man, Tom. Once maybe I'd have fought against a warning red. Now—well, it wouldn't be a simple thing for me if I were demoted. Twenty years at this desk. If it means anything at all now, it means I'm part of

a big operation, and I've got to fit in, do my part."

"Sure," I said. "So I'll see you later."

I dropped the gyrocar down on the big dome called Public Circle. The sounds of a land gone crazy with excitement rolled up around me. My investigator's card got me through fast enough and to the Starship where it lay under the big dome, files of people drifting past, gawking and exclaiming at its battered hulk.

Knowing I was being tailed, I didn't try to avoid them. I didn't even bother to try a couple of tricks to make sure they were tailing me. I knew.

I'D NEVER thought of acting against orders before. I didn't even bother to think much about why I was doing it now. I wanted facts. If the Controllers, the brains of society, started cracking, the people would have to get out of it themselves. They ought to know, I figured, what was what. For efficiency, the individual gives up his sovereignty to the Plan, and the Plan becomes a big social entity. That's all right, maybe, I'd always figured, as long as it works. But the right hand of such a big social entity still should know what its left hand is doing.

Donnelli, in his neat green uniform, was in the Captain's quarters of the Starship. I felt awe, and a kind of humiliation, and envy too, and again those feelings of bitterness, of being left out. Donnelli sat stiffly at a small chrome table. His hair was black and short, fitting the high bony structure of his face. His eyes were black and expressionless. Donnelli and his crew had spent over thirty years altogether in deep space, finding suns and planets, and galaxies, mapping out the Universe, discovering wonderful new forms of intelligent life, and a thousand other things that I suddenly realized were incomprehensible to me.

These men were far removed from my kind and me. I knew that now, just from looking close into Donnelli's eyes. I'd never talked personally with a Star-rover. His eyes had looked on too many alien worlds, and too many different kinds of space to have much in common with me, I thought.

I told him he'd made a nice speech. And then I ask him if he would mind telling me *what actually happened out there*.

No expression. No hesitation. "Naturally there was a great deal I didn't talk about. My log contains over a thousand spools. My talk was only an hour long. I'm afraid I could hit only a few of the high spots. Later there'll be more releases..."

He talked on and I watched him. There seemed a blankness in his eyes. A brightness on top, and a blankness underneath, like glass reflecting light only from the outside. I felt ridiculous, and I knew then that this little foray of mine was over. For good.

"Do you ever find that it gets lonely out there in space?" I said. "Or maybe something you find out there bothers you, inside I mean?"

He smiled, whimsically I thought. "We're chosen for psychological suitability. No loneliness, not with new worlds always before us. Nothing bothers us out there—except routine troubles, and the fact that we can't move far and fast enough."

I got up and left. I knew the outside of the ship was all the farther I was going. I'd know that if Donnelli didn't let something out, I wouldn't have a chance to look any deeper.

Two men waited for me outside. They were in Investigation, too; but they were somewhere in a bureau that could take care of me. They took me up in an elevator to the rooflanding and to their gyrocar. They didn't say anything. Words were certainly unnecessary. I thought of Sally who had wanted to go out and enjoy herself tonight...with me. I'd not see her

again, I figured, and I was still wondering if I cared much.

I'd apprehended various rebels and recalcitrants, deviants and the like. But I'd never had anything to do with what happened to them afterward. They went on and into some other bureau and they never caused society any more trouble.

They were rehabilitated. That included, many times, change of name, kind of employment, family ties, everything connected with the former personality. That was what we were told. But I'd never heard of any of them again. That was all I knew. Maybe they were put out of the way, like in the older times, in a little room somewhere and a gas pellet would drop, something like that.

There was a lot I didn't know. But I did know I didn't want to be rehabilitated. Become someone else. I wanted to be me. I'd prefer the gas pellet to being changed into someone else so I'd never remember me.

That was one reason I was scared. The other reason was that I was scared of finding out the truth. But they took me into the office of a man named Stauffer, and he told it to me straight. After that there was nothing, absolutely nothing to be afraid of.

Nothing. That's the whole trouble.

IT WAS softly lighted, comfortable. For me, not quite relaxing. Stauffer was slim and casual and serious with his greying hair and his solemn look. Intelligence of the high genius order, as is true of all the Controllers. There were hints of strain.

"You know why you're here?"

"Yes. I wasn't supposed to investigate the Starships in regard to what happened to Johnson and Turner. But I did. I didn't find out anything, but I didn't follow orders. So now what?"

"You wanted to know the facts. All right, here are the facts," he said.

"Because Johnson and Turner couldn't stay integrated, because of a

certain psychological pressure, doesn't mean that every Controller is headed for a similar disaster. That pressure's been exerted for some time. Some can stand it, some can't. A trial-and-error process, and in a little while we'll know who is durable and who isn't."

"What's the pressure?" I wanted to know then.

Stauffer didn't sound as though he were talking to me particularly. He was thinking, out loud. I guess this particular subject had occupied a lot of his thinking for some time.

"You know the psycho-social history of man, Mr. Tomkins. Out of the fears of superstition and many kinds of mysticism, gradually upward to a sense of his own personal worth. He was free, he figured, from outside tyranny. He no longer depended on magic helpers, omnipotent crutches. He was on his own tyrant. He was responsible for himself. Then, with Control, we made progress, science, the intellect, the rational, its own reason for being. Man was his own value. Scientific method. Man the rational, science the tool. He could find out the answers. He was no longer a chosen child of fate as the Greeks were. Nor of providence as pre-Copernican Christians were. Progress. Growth. Things would gradually synthesize, make more and more sense as man probed into the Universe and into himself. All the answers were forthcoming. It would only take time."

Stauffer paused. "You see that course clearly?"

I nodded.

Stauffer went on. "The Universe had a new significance. It symbolized man's expansive spirit. It represented man, an infinite prospect for growth. If we weren't the center of the Universe, a deity's chosen, then we were part of a great cosmic meaning, we figured. We belonged to the Universe and the Universe was part of

man. It represented promise, hope, reason."

"Why the past tense?" I asked.

"Space travel was perfected. We went to Mars, Venus, the Moons of Jupiter. New concepts and enthusiasms. We found no life on the other planets of this Solar System. The Hyperdrive was developed. Infinity before us. The Universe was man's promise. In it, as part of it, man would find a reaffirmation of himself, other intelligence, perhaps higher, and his identification with the Universe would grow to a final synthesis, sometime."

"That's right," I said. "That's the way it is."

Stauffer shook his head. "Only it isn't. The Starships bring back dreams and promises. But—Tomkins—there's nothing out there. Nothing at all—anywhere—"

IF THE meaning wasn't clear from his words, it was from the tone of his voice. My hands felt cold. My knees felt weak. I concentrated my eyes on bright solid objects in the room. The glass, the sharp lengths of chrome.

"We've sent ships out for three hundred years. For a while after the Hyperdrive the ships came back and the identification and excitement and enthusiasm and promise grew. But always the report was the same. No life anywhere. The psychological effect was obvious. So we started telling lies, pretending, building up the myth. Life on other worlds, new gadgets, always hope and promise..."

He hesitated then said, "You don't like that, Tomkins? You'd rather have them know the truth? Think about it."

I was thinking about it—a little bit. I'll be thinking about it more and more I'm afraid.

"So," Stauffer said, "we've used our reason to establish what we believe a long long time ago, before

Copernicus. Man is the center of the Universe. But now he doesn't have the reason for it. No religion to make sense out of it for him. Few worlds we've found have been even as habitable as this one. So there's no reason to go to the stars, except this psychological one. We've got to maintain the illusion until—man becomes completely and thoroughly sufficient unto himself—until the answer can come entirely from himself, his own power of reason. And if not that—then we don't know."

"Is that all?" I whispered.

Stauffer shook his head. "It's what lies, or doesn't lie, beyond the Rim, Tomkins. Maybe that's worse than finding no life anywhere within it. The Hyperdrive lets us explore innumerable parsecs of space. No life anywhere. Barren planets. Millions of suns, millions of planets. And no life. But there would always be a chance of finding life—except one ship went beyond the Rim, and by some accident, came back. The others who went beyond the Rim are lost. Listen, Tomkins—you go far enough and even the barren planets no longer exist, no suns, no galaxies. Nothing but blackness. Unspace. Notspace. Cold, sterile, lifeless."

Stauffer's forehead was shiny with sweat. "The Universe as a familiar system has an end. The Rim. And beyond that, nothing. Tomkins, even the iconoclastic, the ironic Socrates had a personal God to bolster his courage. And here we are, Tomkins, a few people comparatively, among all the millions of light years of galaxies. In all the Universe—man stands—alone—"

"It must be hard...keeping up the illusions," I said.

"People want to believe it. It will have to go on until man's strong enough to face—emptiness around him. We figure that if men like Johnson and Turner and others can't stand it, the people couldn't stand it either.

We're using ourselves as guinea-pigs; we've got to find an answer."

I said, "You haven't explored the whole universe. There's always a chance—"

"Of finding a world somewhere with life on it? We've covered almost the entire Universe and—nothing. Man's always depended on something outside himself, but now we're at the end of the road. Now man has to rely completely on himself. We've got to find *all* the answers, Tomkins, but *all* of them, within ourselves."

"Like Johnson did," I said. "And Turner?"

"No. A positive, sane way out. Now man's alone, now he either finds something, or degenerates. He's got to become completely sufficient unto himself, know that he's his own reason for being, that he needs nothing more to justify himself than—himself."

"So now," I said, "I know the truth. I wasn't supposed to find out. Now I'm to be rehabilitated."

"We didn't want you to know the truth. Even with Turner's intelligence—"

"Sometimes a genius can think too damn much," I said. "Anyway, Stauffer, I want you to kill me. Don't change me into someone else, someone like that glassy-eyed robot who commands the Starship. Is that too much to ask for finding out the truth?"

STAUFFER said no. "Nothing like that, Tomkins. Some people need rehabilitation. Some people prefer it. Go on back out there, Tomkins, because you're the one who knows the truth. If you think you can live with the truth, go ahead. I wish you luck."

"I could broadcast the truth," I said.

"Sure," Stauffer said. "But not many would care to believe you. We have a much better story, and maybe the sanity of the whole world depends on it."

That was right. Who would want to believe me? The truth I'd found out

wasn't anything anyone would want to hear. And if the Controllers were working on a way out, what would be the point anyway? If they weren't right, what alternative could I offer? Well, I could think about it.

I thanked him for the information. Stauffer was sitting there behind the big desk, and he seemed much smaller and the room much bigger, than when I'd come in. And as I went out the door and down the long tubular length of the metal hall toward the elevator, I imagined Stauffer there alone, getting smaller and smaller and finally being only a dot, and then I couldn't see him at all.

So I called Sally. I'm not going to take up time trying to explain how I felt about Sally now. But I'd found out the kind of truth that can change a lot of things about a person. "Sally," I said over the gyrocar phone. "I'll be over in five minutes."

"But—"

"We're going to be married," I said.

She murmured something and I went on over. We were up on the roof-landing by the gyrocar when I kissed her again she cried a little. I guess she was awfully happy. But maybe no happier than I was. "I was thinking of other worlds," I whispered. "Of the stars, and of other suns, so I didn't have time to think of you. Now I have time. I've got time to think of you, sweetheart, all the time in the world."

I looked up at the night sky and the other lights of stars. Millions of dreams up there, all dead. And I looked down again to the new bright light of my love's face.

If man finds the answer now, he's got to find it in himself. And if he finds it in himself, he must find it also in the hearts of his brothers, and above all, in the heart and soul and the joy and the pain and the living and the dying of his love.

Curtain In The Sky

(continued from page 66)

He had a headache, and he now knew more electro-gravitational field-physics than he would ever find sense referents for. Some of what he understood had no part in any human life. Perhaps the tube should have burned out sooner— Now, he felt different, slightly alien, and more hungry than ever.

He switched off the useless encephalograph, went to the window and stood looking out.

The sweet aromatic scent of crushed grass reached him. Faintly low on the northern horizon a trace of aurora borealis flickered in folds, a curtain across the clear night sky, making

visible the ionosphere that coruscated invisibly, englobing the Earth in ripples that resembled the ripples of electricity in the grey matter of Prescott's brain.

He stood there a long time.

"What is life?" he asked once and laughed.

He was still drunk, and would never remember any of this in the morning, or know why he felt differently. But this was just as well; no one would believe him anyway. He was satisfied enough to know for a few hours—

The Earth was conscious.



The Melting Pot

(continued from page 71)

Thanks to the smaller type-size used in this column, since the last edition, it's now feasible to give more space to reviews, and less short "honorable mentions" such as those following. There's also another way of getting in probably fifteen or twenty thousand additional words, but unless you knew Army, International, or the abbreviated short-hand code system, it might be inadequate.

VARIANT WORLD—Shel Deretchin, 1234 Utica Ave., Brooklyn 3, N.Y. 15c, 10/\$1.00. Bimonthly. Good...could be a mite better, but all the same, good.

FANTASTA—Larry Balint, 3255 Golden Ave., Long Beach, 6, Calif. 5c, 12/\$1.00. Irregular Monthly. Here's where a buck, as in the "good old days", is still a buck.

STF TRENDS—Box 184, Napoleon, Ohio. Sample 25c, 10/\$1.00. Ten Issues Yearly. A lot more than a dollar is worth. Trends now steadily in top shape.

SCIENCE FICTION BULLETIN—Harlan Ellison, 12701 Shaker Blvd., Cleveland 20, Ohio. (Apt. #616...knock before entering). 25c, 12/\$2.25. Monthly. You like a good time? This one's IT! A real humdinger.

OMEGA—Keith Joseph, 105 Richland Ave., San Francisco, Calif. 15c, 4/50c. Quarterly. Printing is hazy, but only a first issue so far...should ripen and mellow with age.

SPACE REVIEW—Box 241, Bridgeport 2, Conn. 35c, 4/\$1.00. Quarterly. Flying saucers, celestial phenomena, etc. Those liking the latter will appreciate this compact periodical.

FIENDETTA—Chas. Wells, 405 E. 62nd St., Savannah, Ga. 10c, 3/40c. Five Times Yearly. Format's rather crowded together, but this job's improving all the time. Good reading.

ECLIPSE—Ray Thompson, 410 S. 4th St., Norfolk, Nebraska. 10c, 6/50c. Bimonthly. Neat layout and rapidly coming up. He needs artwork.

TERRA—Gilbert Menicucci, 675 Delano Ave., San Francisco 12, Calif. 15c, 4/50c. Quarterly. Formerly anti-fanmags, now issuing his first one. May be promising given time...

RENAISSANCE—Joe Semenovitch, 155-07 71st St., Flushing 67, L.I., N.Y. 10c, 6/50c. Bimonthly. Lots of good reading. Well developed and produced. Good articles, fiction, etc. & etc.

SCIENCE FICTION ADVERTISER—Roy Squires, 1745 Kenneth Rd., Glendale 1, Calif. 25c, 6/\$1.00 Bimonthly. Still a unique and only mag of its type in the fan-press today. Well recommended!

Calvin Thos. Beck
P. O. Box 964 - G. P. O.
New York 1, N. Y.





[Continued From Page 8]

Your cover was very good. Ditto for the trimmed edges. It gives a li'l more distinction to your mag, and frankly that's one reason I purchased it. Bryce Walton's name was a come-on, as well as the "Blue Star" title—and I was a little curious to see what James Blish had written. One disappointment marred my reading: I thought "The Evolution Of Science Fiction" would be entertaining (as well as informative). It wasn't much of either. This guy was certainly wordy in his essay and it took a lot to read through to the end. Tracing the Gothic influence, and analyzing "Frankenstein" on moral grounds (though really correct) is pretty highfalutin' stuff. No mention of Edger Rice Burroughs (instead Rider-Haggard)... certainly the creator of "Princess Of Mars," and "Synthetic Men of Mars," and others, was to some extent an influence on men who tried their forte in this genre. Glad, however, that he mentioned Murray Leinster. I defy anyone to argue with me that Leinster isn't the best all-around, and most consistently interesting, author in the STF field.

As this letter is a dissimulation of gripes and praise, let's continue in each vein. There's a certain writer around, highly praised, and to my mind overvalued. I've tried reading a couple of his stories but they lacked something—the very thing afficianados go nuts over. It's dialogue and simulation of conditions. Conditions, that is, that approximate ours, in this decade, and the dialogue has no vernacular ring that makes it sound different from ours. Hell, if you're going to write about the twenty-first or twenty-third century, let's astrogate the patios. Don't tell me the speech will be *exactly* the same. It spoils

something, this overbending to be natural and approximate. It destroys the feeling of illusion and feeling of "upwardness." Also the gags and exploitations of commerce, etc., of our times should find no parallel in further times. We read science-fiction for escape and romance; myself, I don't want to read about real-estate huckstering on the moon; if I want domestic atmosphere in my reading I can find that in *Collier's* or *Redbook*, where it belongs.

Everybody has something to say about Ray Bradbury. Certainly the field is richer because of his contributions. He might be at times somewhat lyrical, but the overall picture is compelling. At least you're reading something that titillates the senses. Let's have more lyricism and less commercialism.

Except for one letter, your correspondence section wasn't too absorbing. I'm referring, of course, to letter written by S. T. And your comment on this, expressing as well your policy and feelings on manuscript revising, was darn good reading.

—2156 Fifth Avenue, Troy, New York

Futuristic patois is a knotty problem for the best scribes. It has to seem plausible, and yet be comprehensible on its face—few readers will care to look up a glossary of the terms. Obviously, current slang won't do, or terms based on current slang—in a very short time such attempts will seem as dated as the lingo in the "Skylark" stories, as well as looking silly right now. Barring the works of some

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genius with a flair for language and a thorough knowledge and comprehension of patois-trends, it seems to me that the most sensible thing is to have a simple, convincing conversational style based upon present usages, avoiding slang-fads.

A ROUND WITH REYNOLDS

by Norman J. Clarke

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

The first story I read in the Aug. issue of SFQ happened to be Mack Reynolds' "Advice From Tomorrow". I found it quite interesting, up to a point. This point was the appearance of the stranger in the bar, who did such a fine job of debunking the plot hatched by "them nasty old scientists." The stranger says that the scientists intended to set up "...a benevolent dictatorship, perhaps, but a dictatorship." At this revelation, I presume, all readers are supposed to gasp in horror and outrage. The stranger continues "... dictatorships are bad no matter who does the dictating; the principle is wrong." All very well—except for one thing.

Wotthehell else kind of government can you or anyone think of that is not a dictatorship. Every government on earth makes laws and enforces them. The only other kind of state possible is a completely individualistic state—which is highly improbable. Communism in Russia is a dictatorship—we know that. But do we know that Democracy is also a dictatorship? In theory it is a dictatorship of the majority; in practice it is a dictatorship of the influential.

A dictatorship of scientists, and technicians, could hardly do a worse job of running things than the present world-wide dictatorships of various countries. Scientists in this sense, include psychologists, philosophers, sociologists, etcetera, etcetera. It is quite apparent that such trained men could do a much better job of holding the reins than a thug who has beaten his way to the top (Russia) or some glad-handing, mealy-mouthed small-town boy who has demagogued his way into the confidence of the voting public (America, Canada, etc.) who are so easily deceived by bland speakers.

But back to our mysterious stranger. He tells the newspaper men that the people of the future cannot afford to have their time loused up by the silly errors of the past, but he neglects to give a hint as to what kind of government is in effect in the future. Most writers who bat out tales concerning governments can very easily point

[Turn To Page 86]

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SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY

out the faults of contemporary government, but few offer real solutions. To my mind, at least, this world-government by scientists sounds like the best offering to date. Even Plato spoke of such a government, although his "scientists" were more philosophers than scientists.

Heck, I don't intend to go too deep into this thing, for one reason, at least, because it is not too wise to suggest that our system of government is not perfect. McCarthy might be listening.

To get on to less controversial ground, I must add that the trimmed edges are a long-awaited improvement and it is to be hoped that more such improvements are to be added in the near future, e.g. a little better interior artwork. The article, "Evolution of Science-Fiction" was very well handled, and I am looking forward to "The Plot Forms of S-F", which should prove very interesting.

Any possibility of coming out more frequently? Hmm?

Well, having chewed the fat a little and said what I had to say, I will take pity on the poor suffering ed, and steal silently away, like one of them there A-rabs that are always silently stealing away. K.U.T.G.W. which is the well-known "Keep up the etc."

—411 Mayfair Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

If the term "dictatorship" is defined loosely enough, then I suppose that any kind of government whatsoever can be called a dictatorship of something-or-other. However, some of the important aspects of anything which can justly be termed democracy are that (a) *all* officials are subject to the basic laws, even where some may have certain types of immunity; no one, that is, is by virtue of his office, *above* the laws (b) there is a legal way in which an unpopular and/or venal official can be recalled from office, through legal expression of public disapproval; it isn't necessary to petition the leader, or start an uprising (c) a legal redress for civil wrongs exists, whether or not the system is at all times operating at its best, and there is a *chance* that a higher court may reverse the decision of a lower court (d) the State is not *assumed to be right* whenever an official accuses or arrests a citizen on some charge or other; in other words, the

IT SAYS HERE

prosecutor has to prove his case beyond a shadow of a doubt in the minds of the jury—while the accused does not have to prove innocence; he only has to arouse *reasonable doubt* of his guilt. (On the other hand, in many non-democratic dictatorships, the State is automatically considered right, and the accused considered guilty; in some, to protest innocence amounts to treason, inasmuch as this amounts to accusing the State of arresting innocent people.) I think these are the types of "dictatorship" that Reynolds' futureman was speaking of. There is, further, the well-founded historical examples of "benevolent dictatorships"—these have existed, but have never endured very long; I have yet to hear of one which did not become extremely repressive eventually, no matter how mild and "benevolent" the start.

POT BOILING

by Val Walker

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

On the subject of "The Melting Pot", I agree with Paul Mittelbuscher that a quarterly magazine just can't give an up to date fanzine review.

There are three possible answers to this. 1. Change SFQ to a bi-monthly pub. 2. Put the "Melting Pot" in *Future*. 3. Change the setup of the MP; instead of just a review of several 'zines, pick out one or two 'zines an issue, and make a complete report on it; i. e., Bio. of editor, how the 'zine was started, circulation. In short interesting detail in a behind-the-scenes way, not just a story and article review. Tell about the people that help to put the mag out every month, maybe a little something about the steady contributors to the 'zine.

Or perhaps, this is a dream, you could put a regular fanmag review in *Future*, and have the behind-the-scenes deal in SFQ.

Mr. Lowndes, I am very happy to say—and I'm sure you're happy to hear—that the quality of your mags has really been coming up of late. *Future*, within the past 3 or 4 issues, has come from way down the list to a very respectful position. *Dynamic* fell off somewhat the last issue, but on the whole is holding a high standard. As for this issue of SFQ, well there wasn't a bad story in it, nor was there an

[Turn Page]

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SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY

average story. All five stories were well above average!

The feature story by James Blish almost made me forget that little piece of tripe he helped turn out for *Dynamic*, "The Duplicated Man".

Tom Clareson's article is very good.

The Book Reviews can either stay or go, doesn't matter to this one.

Now to the letters, the most enjoyable part of any S-F magazine.

Well dear old ST is back again; honestly that guy seems to hate people. I'll bet if he had kids he would beat them. Altho, I guess, he has some good thoughts, looks like he could think of a better way to tell them however.

Disagree with Robert Coulson; Madge has a fan 'zine review. You haven't the field quite to yourself.

Carol McKinney wrote an enjoyable letter as usual, and as usual without saying a thing.

Wallace McKinney—a very thoughtful letter.

Oh yes, before I go top three letter writers—Paul Mittelbuscher, Carol McKinney, Wallace MacKinley.

6488 E. 4th Pl., Tulsa, Oklahoma

SYMPOSIUM SUGGESTED

by Burton K. Beerman

Dear RWL:

You really hit the jackpot with the current issue of SFQ. All five stories were good. In fact, "Common Time" is going down in my book as one of the best stories you have ever published. Running right behind the Blish effort, and well above the usual pulp material, are "Dreadful Therapy" and "Advice From Tomorrow".

However, my appearance in your pages is not to ogle and ogle the stories. There's more important business at hand.

I've hit upon what is called among the genre a brainstorm. This is it.

Instead of one person running your fan press review column, you have a symposium. In that way, the fan-politics referred to in Lee Riddle's letter would not enter into the picture. Too, you will have opinions of several different people, each representing a different phase of the SF field. Let's say you take a big name fan—frinstance Cal Beck who is now running the feature, add a pro-writer who has come up through the ranks—Budrys, Bradbury, or the like, throw in a fan-editor and either a fan not active in the publishing end of it, or a pro-writer not involved in fandom as a contributor. That makes four. Yourself makes five. The fan editor and the non-writing fan, together with the pro-writer not involved in fandom would rotate.

You, no doubt, have seen the mystery

IT SAYS HERE

zine *EQMM*. The book review column is run that way. They have a short statement—usually taken from a review—from each participant which adds up to five different views of the book. Short statements like that would constitute the summing-up section, where Beck has just used a short sentence about each zine. The main part of the column would be devoted to an actual symposium analyzing new zines. A well-established publication like *Destiny* or *Slant* would not need to be analyzed in this more detail section. New zines like *Infinity*, *Reason*, or *Eclipse* would be dissected with the results, most likely, being greatly beneficial to the new editors.

More important is the need for you to make this a *monthly* feature. You can dispense with the ambiguous title "Melting Pot" and just run a symposium in both your bi-monthlies. A discourse on the efforts of individual fans could fill the gap in *SFQ*. Also, make Bob Madle's column appear in every issue of your two bi-monthlies.

—Grove School, Madison, Conn.

The symposium suggestion is a very good one—and would be fine if (a) the editor had the time to make the necessary arrangements for it (b) we had the space to run a separate fan-mag review department. Unfortunately, neither of these two conditions obtain.

RETRACTIONS, GRIPES, AND COMMENTS

by Gilbert E. Menicucci

Dear Robert:

I suppose that if you titled your letters, you'd call this "Retractions, Gripes and Comments." I read the letter column in the August issue of *SFQ*, and find that I seem to be kicked around to high heaven—or low hell, if you prefer. And I can honestly say that I don't like it one bit! I suppose that I'd best get to the very meat of this letter, though.

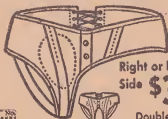
I am truly sorry for saying that *Fantastic Adventures* ever had a fanzine review column. It was entirely my fault for making such a stupid, and unquestionably foolish, mistake. I cannot truthfully say that it was a mistake in typing, although my typing was quite bad enough. I did know then, and I do know now that *Fantastic Adventures* never had a fanzine review column. I am truly sorry that I said that it ever had one.

And now I think I'll gripe a bit. In my

[Turn Page]

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SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY

letter, I said that fanzine review columns
were common. I was then told by one of
your readers that I was a "misinformed
gentleman." At the present time, and in
this letter, I'll repeat what I said for those
of your reading public that can't read:
Fanzine Review Columns ARE Common!
It seems that the childish readers in your
selling public can't understand that I was
INCLUDING fanzines reviewing fanzines.
I truly hope that this makes my stand on
the matter quite plain, for those of your
readers that are too young to understand
the written word, and for those that are
so rash as to slander another fan without
even thinking first.

If anyone should know what fanzines
review other fanzines, it should be Calvin
Thomas Beck, and yet—Mr. Beck was one
of the more critical of—ahhh—my 'friends'.
There are dozens upon dozens of fanzines
that review fmz's. *C/SFD*, *Terra*, *Fantasta*
and I could go on for days... I won't
bother, though, CTB, PM and the rest of
the fans know them as well as I do.

I wonder if C. T. B. will review *Terra* in
"The Melting Pot"? I sincerely hope that
C. T. B. won't let personal opinions of
what I said enter into his review of the
fmz. It's bad enough, right now, without
having someone say anything about it that
wasn't true...

Speaking of reviews, and such, I think
I'll mention that I agree with C. T. B.
about Silverburg. Although Bob Silver
(space) burg is a good fanzine editor, I
can not say that I think he's as good as
Paul Mittelbushner seems to think. If I
were to name a fan to be the editor of a
promag, I think that I'd name Shelvy. He's
about as good an editor as any... Oh...
here I go again, putting my size 967 foot
into it, again...

You'll note that I made this letter only
1 1/2 double-spaced pages long. I did this,
so that you could print it in the letter
column, without using too much space. I
think, *Friend Knight Of The Blue Pencil*,
that it would be no more than fair for you
to print this. It seems to me that this has
all the earmarks of feud, and I would like
to get my opinions down, now, so that
when/if the letter-column gets so filled
with critics of me, a person can always
read back to get my opinions.

P. S. Keep up the good work, and, most of
all, **TRIMMED EDGES**. T. Edges really
make SFQ!

—675 Delano Avenue, San Francisco 12,
California

I don't think that any offense was
meant to you, Mr. Menicucci, and am
more than willing to present your ex-
planation of what you meant by that

[Turn To Page 92]

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SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY

statement, which seems to have been
misunderstood. I can't keep any fan
from taking pot-shots at another fan,
of course, but this department won't
be used for a target-range if I can
help it. Disagreement with what some-
one else says? Certainly. But no per-
sonal gibes.

ROSES FOR ROSS

by Ron Auger

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

Many of the magazines appeared with
some of their best covers on record this
month for some reason, and Ross' design
for the Aug. *Science Fiction Quarterly* was
right up with the best to be seen. The in-
teriors were all excellent, too. Orban is my
favourite, of course. Did you ever notice
that his people are all *individuals*? No stock
faces. Beecham's work is reminiscent of
Orban's, while Luros' is straightforward
and capable.

I'm enclosing a coupon, so I'll only say
that the stories represented a decline from
last issue—but the Blish and Walton novel-
ets were both really outstanding. Your
group is fast going to the top of the list
because of such fine, original writing. Mil-
ton Lesser has only two stocks-in-trade:
sex and violent action. This time he used
plot #2 and the sentimentality only made
it worse.

"It Says Here" is too short: L. Sprague
de Camp's book reviews were good. I can't
work up much enthusiasm for "The Melt-
ing Pot".

For the rest of my letter, I'd like to argue
some points about Tom Clareson's "The
Evolution of Science Fiction". Frankly, the
article annoyed me. I never have been able
to understand why so many people who
write about science fiction refuse to write
about it, and write about fantasy instead.
Certainly, fantasy is a branch of literature
that has existed since time immemorial, but
science fiction must be defined so as to
distinguish it from this huge mass of super-
natural fiction. Mr. Clareson's definition
does not do this, apparently, for he insists
on devoting his space to stories that could
not possibly be called science fiction. It
seems perfectly obvious to me that science
fiction is fiction extrapolated from science,
and is distinguished from all other fantasy
by having a natural explanation for its
events, instead of a supernatural one. Thus,
science fiction, as a genre, could not exist
before the rise of science in the 18th cen-
tury, and does not come into its own until
the middle of the 19th.

IT SAYS HERE

Of course, isolated examples could be found in earlier times such as "The Ebony Horse" from the "Arabian Nights", or Francis Bacon's "The New Atlantis"; but these were accidents, and did not form part of a continuous stream. Before Bacon, science itself scarcely existed and stories dealing with alchemy, astrology, etc., are not science fiction because these precursors sciences did not rely on natural explanations for their experiments. It makes no difference if an author believed astrology to be true—the belief was supernatural, not rational.

The examples of literary origins given by Claesron are entirely from fantasy, whereas he could have used stf examples like Voltaire's "Micromegas" or Sir Thomas More's "Utopia". In the early Nineteenth Century, we again get lengthy discussions of Gothic novels, none of which were remotely connected with science fiction, except a late one, Mary Shelley's "Frankenstein". Matthew Gregory Lewis' "The Monk" (from which Mr. Claesron derives Monk Lewis!) and Mrs. Ward's stories are outright fantasy or horror stories, and the explanations offered by Mrs. Ward are of the "it was only her imagination, after all" type. I suspect that Mr. Claesron's *Blackwoods'* writers were like Hawthorne—interested in atmospheric ghost or psychic yarns. I can't see why he should try to minimize Poe's contribution and as for leaving out Verne, Grant Allen, Conan Doyle—well! He typically lists an example of Edward Bellamy's work, which is an outright fantasy about a man who travels astrally to Mars, instead of a stf classic like "Looking Backward". Then we get a slight reference to Wells, the master, a discussion of spiritualism and psychology along with Jack London's fantasy "The Star Rover", instead of an stf yarn like "The Scarlet Plague". In discussing Ambrose Bierce, he manages to get in two misspellings of Arkham (Arkham, Arkheim), some ghost stories, and leaves out such stf classics as "Moxon's Master". Then we get some spiritualism. The contemporary period is glossed over... no mention of Hall, Flint, Cummings, Binder, Leinster's early work. Ah well...

—23 Doncliffe Dr., Toronto, Ontario, Canada

The controversy over definitions of science-fiction, and which pre-Amazing stories ought or should not be admitted as examples of science-fiction, ought to be good indefinitely. In the long run, I suspect that most everyone will pick the definition he likes best—but anyone who has strong and decided views is free to make them palatable to as many others as they can.

[Turn Page]

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Gunn's opinions, but that doesn't mean
that these are the "official" opinions of
my magazines; any opinion that looks
interesting, and is presented clearly
enough so that I think I know what the
writer is talking about, will be wel-
comed here.

TIME FOR A SHIFT

by Sid Sullivan

Dear Bob:

It seems that several of the fans have a
good idea in regard to the fanzine reviews.
Keep them, but published in *Future* or
Dynamic. Without the few fanzine reviews
there are today, how are we fledglings to
find out about them? Chaz Riddle's word-
of-mouth method may work for him, but
after eight years of reading stf off and on
(more off then on until '49) I've yet to
meet another fan face-to-face who could
give me stf news of any kind; and I simply
don't have time to keep up an extensive
correspondence with a dozen or so other
aficionados. Therefore bless you, boy, for
telling us about them. Even if the particu-
lar issue reviewed is no longer available,
we still know the name and address of a
zine that had one interesting issue and is
likely to have an equally enjoyable current
one. If you must drop something let it be
the book reviews. Although that feature is
the best of its kind out, almost every pub-
lisher does have them and after reading so
darn many reviews of the same book I've
pieced the plot together and lost interest in
it. I'd much rather have de Camp's arti-
cles. His and all the others your maga-
zine carry are absolutely tops.

Trimming the pages was intelligent of
you, now be brilliant and get a smoother,
whiter paper. That in the Aug. issue seems
to have taken the type better than the
previous one (my copy, perhaps) but it
still doesn't match the quality of the sto-
ries and features. Silly though it seems, a
mag with readable paper seems to shout,
"My stories are every bit as good as the
paper they're printed on."

It does seem that each time I write I'm
panning you horribly. Constructive criti-
cism, it's called. You are trying so earnest-
ly to make yours the best, that I want to
help. Our profit in enjoyment will be far
greater than yours in financial gain and
tenure of the editor's desk. Or do you do it
for fun, too?

—761 N. Holmes, Memphis, Tenn.

Ah, but look at the advantages of
[Turn To Page 96]

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SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY

our paper; I can claim that most of the stories are *better* than the paper they're printed on. (Might as well look at it this way, you know, because I can't do anything about the paper.)

Editing science fiction magazines is very definitely "fun", for me, but I do it for cash. And, in order to keep nice money coming my way I have to try to make them appealing to a pretty large audience—much larger than the fan audience. After all, even if every fan alive bought every issue of *Science Fiction Quarterly*, *Future*, and *Dynamic*, this support alone would be far from sufficient to keep the books alive.

Now there are, basically, two ways of appealing to a large audience. One is to make the magazine as good (in the sense of all-around excellence) as possible; the other way is to make them as sensational as possible, appealing to a non-discriminating (so far as excellence goes) public. Both approaches can be profitable, as has been proven in the past, and I must frankly confess that I am not sure but that the latter approach might make more money—at least for awhile.

However, I'm vain enough to consider *how* I make nice money, and to want to bring out a magazine I can take a bit of pride in—in my aims, if not in the achievement in every case.

How does this stack up, then, in my attitude toward the fan world? Well, I can't afford to cater to the fans exclusively; I have to consider the fact that they represent only a small fraction of the audience. What I do look for is such aspects of the fan world which are exportable, you might say, to the larger audience—such things which fans particularly enjoy, but which might be of interest to non-fans. And I can only discover what these things are by small-scale experiments.

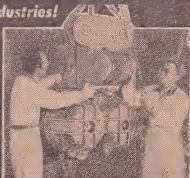


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THE RECKONING

A Report on Your
Votes and Comments

The closeness of the point-scores this time seems to bear out the contentions of those who wrote in to say that all the stories were above average. Only the Garrett novelet failed to evoke distaste completely; so, I must doff my hat to Carol McKinney who charged me with (again) failing to feature the best story in the book. (This, you understand doesn't alter my private opinion that I *did* feature the "best" story, but I admit to misjudging your preferences.)

No space for "Remembered Words" in a separate box, this time, so I'll list the originals winners here: (1) Charles Lee Riddle (2) Paul Mittlebuscher (3) Carol McKinney. Riddle gets an unusual distinction; for the first time, everyone who voted for a particular letter-writer listed him in first place.

The stories came out as follows:

1. Characteristics: Unusual (Garrett)	2.23
2. Common Time (Blish)	2.87
3. Dreadful Therapy (Walton) tied with Advice From Tomorrow (Reynolds)	2.95
4. Halt the Blue Star's Rising (Lesser)	3.23

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Number these in order of your preference, to the left of numeral; if you thought any of them bad, mark an "X" beside your dislikes.

- 1. The Irrationals (Lesser)
- 2. Mercury Bill & The Amorous Hunk
(Stearns)
- 3. Architect Of Chaos (Danelaw)
- 4. Curtain In The Sky (Dye)
- 5. The Myth-Makers (Walton)

★
Who are your nominees for the three best letters in "It Says Here"?

1 2 3

General comment

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